ERRING

YET

NOBLE



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A Tale

OF AND FOR WOMEN.

BY

ISAAC G. REED, JR.,

AUTHOR OF "THE RUSSIAN BALL," "HEAD AND HEART FRUITS," ETC.

TENTH EDITION.

"Eighty thousand women in one smile,
Who only smile at night beneath the gas."

* * "That for a *single offence*, however grave, a whole life should be blasted, is a doctrine repugnant to nature."

"The good are ever the most charitable."

"Neither do I condemn thee. Go and sin no more."

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TO

TWO PURE WOMEN,

ONE LIVING AND ONE DEAD,

WHO HAVE LOVED ME AND WHOM I LOVE,

THIS

Tale of and for Women

IS DEDICATED BY

THE AUTHOR.

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ERRING, YET NOBLE.

INTRODUCTION,

WHICH THE READER IS PARTICULARLY REQUESTED TO LOOK AT.

Most people will call this book a *bold* one, and many will style it a decidedly *dangerous* one.

To the first charge we are proud to plead guilty. But to the second accusation against our book, we object altogether.

One word on this latter point.

If it be dangerous to believe and to teach that a woman may, under peculiar circumstances, *err, yet not be utterly lost;* may still repent and still atone :

If it be dangerous to believe and to teach that many a woman who *has* "erred," may yet be *more truly noble* in the sight of Heaven than many a woman who has *not,* but who is stained with irreligion, hypocrisy and other vices :

If it be dangerous to believe and to teach that *error in a man* is as great as precisely the same error in a woman :

If it be dangerous to believe and teach that *the betrayal of a woman is murder, and should be punished as such :*

And, lastly, if it be dangerous to believe and to teach two things :—

First, that what is called "society" is *directly responsible* for what is called "immorality."

Second, that immorality *is by no means the only evil* having a social existence.

If it be dangerous to believe and to teach these things, then is the author of this book a very great sinner ; then is his book a very dangerous and immoral production.

But if these things are true, and if it be right occasionally *for a good purpose to speak the truth plainly*, then is our book a very good and useful one.

Reader, we leave the question of the moral or immoral quality of our book to your own enlightened reason and honest conscience.

BOOK THE FIRST.

ERROR, LOVE AND EXPIATION.

CHAPTER I.

TWO LOVERS; OR, A JOY THAT IS SORROW.

PARIS, gay, glad, great, gorgeous Paris; capital city of that most capital land, France, *la bélle* France; land of the grape and of the jest; city of the ball and the barricade; city, where life is a pastime, and where the only reality is death; city, where the palace and the theatre usurp the place of the school and of the temple; Paris, dear, delightful, dangerous Paris! our story opens within thy festive limits.

* * * * * *

"Dearest, I love you. You know that I love you."

Such were the words uttered by the lips of Henry Hericot, the gayest young American in Paris, to Julia Witherson.

"But, Henry, are you sure that you know what love is? I am told that love means so much more to a woman than it does to a man. To your sex it is but a pastime, perhaps a beautiful romance. But to us it is more than a jest, more than a charming poem even; it is to us life itself, the all of life worth having. It is our sex's dream at first, its existence at last. Are you sure then that you know what *real* love is?"

"Ah, dearest, I think I do; but if I should be mistaken, if I should *not* know, your own sweet self can be my teacher. You will find me an apt scholar at the passion."

"But love is more than a passion; it is a *principle:* a principle which o'erpasses all others. You know, Henry, that I care little for the world, infinitely less than I care for the man I love."

"Yes, Julia, I know that you, like myself, have little heed for the vulgar herd, and still less for the gilded shams and follies which the vulgar herd dignify by the names of *laws*. You have

detected, I have taught you to detect, the hollowness of the world's forms, the mockeries of its social and religious conventionalities. I have taught you wisdom, and you have readily become wise. You have learned with me and by me to laugh at society's 'virtue,' to despise society's 'religion.' Is it not so? Are not you and I above all creeds, all codes?"

(Such were the *words* of Henry Hericot. His *thoughts* were these. "What cursed humbug all this is. But she likes this sort of thing. This style of 'independent' cant is just in her line. And of course you must humor a woman if you would have her." So the deceiver thinks; and thus the deceived one replies to his question, "Are not you and I above all creeds, all codes?")

"Yes, Henry, for the man I love I would break all laws, all codes, and spurn all creeds; all, save only the laws of genuine honor and the creed of nature. All else I would regard as less than nothing when weighed with the slightest wish or the most trivial good of him I loved. Could you, for my sake, Henry, spurn the world thus? Do you love me more than you do the world?"

"Aye, dearest, for you are all the world to me."

O! if his words were but as true as his looks are tender!

"And would you love me ever and forever?" asks the girl, of him she deems her lover.

"Yes, Julia," he replies, "for we, wiser than others, will not be fettered by these common everyday ties of law and society, which crush instead of keeping love. *We* will have no obligations in *our* union save those of mutual love and honor, but no restraint. Is it not thus, Julia?"

"It is. But will you love me truly, love me always, Harry? Will you love me in my time of sickness, in my hour of sorrow, when my poor beauty fades, and when I am no longer young?"

"Yes, Julia; I swear ever to be to you all that man can be to woman."

"Will you love me," continued the misguided, miserable girl, who thought herself so wise and happy; "will you love me for

love's sake through life to death? Love me truly, me always, me only?"

"Yes, dearest. Why ask me more questions? Why go through the whole of love's catechism? Were you to interrogate me until midnight, I could only answer, 'yes, dearest.'"

"Then, Henry, I am yours."

"And I thine, Julia, my Julia."

Unhappy pair!

Wherefore unhappy? Is not love bliss? And are they not lovers?

Nevertheless, again we say "unhappy pair!"

For love is not bliss unless it be sanctified and pure. And that is not love where there is error on one side and deception on the other.

Let us be more definite.

Julia Witherson, is that tall, queenly, intellectual looking girl, with a form superbly luxuriant in its outlines, yet most graceful in every curve; with a fine, thoughtful forehead; dark, long, luxuriant hair; large, dark, rather deep-set, and, if we may use the term, wildly-powerful eyes, surrounded by well-defined eyebrows; a fine though rather pale complexion; thin but not sharp lips; evidently proud, courageous, passionate, determined; yet at the present moment all tender and loving; with her exquisite hands clasped in those of her companion, and the tip of her charming foot just visible outside the folds of her magnificent dress. She was, by birth, a New Yorker, but her father and mother, shortly after her birth, took up their abode permanently in Paris. When Julia was six years of age her mother died, and her father being a gay, dissipated man, the motherless child received literally *no moral or religious education whatever*. She was of a gay disposition, though at the same time fond of thought and prone to original, out of the way studies; and was gifted with much talent, independence of mind and powers of observation. Take a character like this, and let it loose, without restraint, to mature itself in philosophi-

cal, infidel and immoral Paris, and the result will be—a woman like Julia Witherson at the age of eighteen. She had many virtues. She had pride, which is a virtue to a certain extent; she had courage, both physical and mental; independence also, which though much decried in certain quarters, is a good thing to possess; she was generous to a fault, incapable of meanness in any of its thousand forms; she was truthful, according to her views of truth, and would have scorned a lie as much as cowardice; but alas! "the trail of the serpent was over all" her noble qualities. The modern French views of social philosophy had taken by imperceptible steps during the course of years a hold upon her naturally pure mind. And as she had plenty of brilliantly bad examples around her, and *no Bible*, her principles were sapped, and her only creed was that of a vague "honor," and a poetical but unpractical "natural religion." Yet this much must be said—she was honest and sincere even in her errors and her unbelief; and withal candid.

About a year before our opening, Miss Witherson had become acquainted with Mr. Henry Hericot. And it speaks well for her that she was for one whole year able to resist the fascinations of this most accomplished hypocrite and ladykiller. But he succeeded at last. Is it any wonder that, thorough man of the world as he was, he succeeded in conquering the naturally virtuous instincts of Julia Witherson, whose Parisian life and education had prepared the way for his triumph? He laid siege to her in the most skillful manner. He commenced operations by taking an interest in her "studies," leading her to converse upon her opinions on religion and society, coinciding with their philosophical looseness; and becoming her tutor on these points, led her from bad to worse, from mere theoretical unorthodoxy to practical immorality. Then he fascinated her, too. He employed his personal charms; pretended to poetry, and to melody; was ardent, yet respectful, *seemed* the very paragon of manly nobility, courted her assiduously, and at last the motherless Julia, who lived, as it were, alone in Paris, with Paris education, Paris creeds, and Paris habits,

learned to love him and, most ill-advised of all, to *trust* him.

* * * * * * *

An hour passed, and over the luxuriously furnished apartment in which the lovers (so we will style them) were seated, the shadows of the twilight fell. The furniture was of the utmost elegance and of the latest fashion, every appointment was *comme il faut*; choice pictures adorned the walls, articles of vertu and bijouterie were scattered in liberal profusion; everything material betokened wealth, and all that was human seemed to indicate happiness. For, in that sumptuous room, through the windows of which the last rays of departing daylight penetrated, there were but two beings, and they were clasped, lip to lip, heart to heart. Hericott's arm was round the exquisite waist of Julia, and in her willing ears he poured the sweet flatteries of successful love.

"But, Harry, dear Harry." Heavens, with what an accent she uttered that simple, short, common, delicious word "dear!" "will you indeed be all that you have promised to me?"

"Can you doubt me, Julia?" asked Hericot.

"No, dearest, for to doubt, doubt with cause, were to destroy my love for you, and to change it to hate. I should die if I were to hate you, dearest."

"Oh, in that case you shall never die. You will live and love forever."

There was silence for a space. Then Julia said, "Harry, I often think of the beautiful creed which you have taught me—that love is in itself a virtue and a religion. That it needs no cold forms, no useless laws, no legal rights, no detestable, worldly conventionalities to consecrate it; these but mar its holiness; love is its own consecration."

"You are right, Julia. You have expressed my creed far more charmingly than I can do."

"Yes," cried the erring enthusiast, raising her charming head, her eyes sparkling, "love needs no laws, as God needs none; for even that strange old book, which Christians call the Bible, tells

us that love is a god, for one text in it, which I now remember, says that 'God is love.'"

"Julia, my Julia."

* * * * * * *

Night.—The lovers have separated.

"Oh, how happy I am," thinks Julia, as she sits in her room preparing, or being prepared, for the evening's entertainment, Madame S——'s *soireé*. He loves me. The loved can afford to be happy. They have called me gay. I shall henceforth strive to merit the title. For he loves me."

"Well, I have succeeded," is the mental soliloquy of Henry Hericot, as he departs. "I knew that I should. No woman has ever resisted me yet. Julia is a strange creature, but no matter. *Vive l'amour* !" And he hums the favorite aria from the last opera.

Unhappy pair!

Unhappy she who errs! Thrice unhappy he who tempts to err! There is a guilty joy that is but a sorrow.

CHAPTER II.

TWO FOES: OR, A SORROW THAT IS A JOY.

A YEAR has passed since the date of the love scene in our last. It is night—and stormy. Paris is as gay a city as any in the world; and yet, even Paris is not very cheerful in the rain. The French are a happy people, and yet the weather *does* affect even Parisians slightly. The clouds are threatening—the sky is invisible—not a star is to be seen, and the streets are comparatively deserted. Julia Witherson is seated alone in the same elegant apartment in which we last saw her. The room has not changed any, but its occupant *has*. A glance at her face shows you that she is far from happy. The marks of care and thought are perceptible—unless we are much mistaken, she has of late been weeping; spite her pride we can detect, even at this moment, traces of sorrowful emotion. Her robes are rich and tasteful. She is dressed now, as ever, elegantly. She is surrounded with luxury, yet she is most unhappy. No wonder. She has been aroused from her mental sleep—she has awakened from her dream of false love and real error—she is not the woman she was twelve months ago.

"I love still," she murmurs; "but, alas, I also doubt—doubt him and *myself*. I have learned my fatal error. Experience has taught me that my social philosophy is a mistake. After all the mass of the world is right in its views of love, of virtue, of marriage; and the school of philosophy, where he led and I have fondly followed, is, on these points, in the wrong. I honestly deemed it right *once*, I *know* it to be false *now*. My instincts tell me this, I can never be happy or self-justified till I am Henry's wife. But will he grant my prayer? Will he marry me? Is he sincere in his anti-marriage

theory? If so, will he relinquish it for me? Ah! I fear he does not love me as he did—still I may wrong him in this—well, I shall soon see. Why does he not come?"

She sighs, and leans her cheek upon her hand, in utter weariness of spirit; and, as she listens to the dreary falling of the rain, a sigh escapes her which has a world of meaning in it. And there and thus she sits and thinks and waits and gazes unheeding upon the luxury around her, till a step is heard—a well-known step. A man enters the apartment. It is the man she awaits, Henry Hericot, her once adorer.

She looks at him intently. He is worthy to be looked at, this lover of hers.

Henry Hericot is one of the handsomest men of his day. Even the hideous mockery of modern, civilized, nineteenth-century "dress" can not destroy the grace of his figure. He is of average height, and capitally proportioned; a thorough man, in physique, certainly. His face seems to be—mark this word *seems*—the very index of a frank, honorable character, is very handsome and of an intellectual cast, also, as indicated by the high forehead. His eyes, dark but not black, are winning; his mouth as beautiful as a woman's, yet there is nothing effeminate about his appearance; his hair, of the same hue as his eyes, is luxuriant for a man, and is a cause of just pride to its possessor, who is as well aware of his personal advantages as any beholder possibly can be, which is evident from the elegant manner in which his person is arrayed. Every detail of his costume is perfect; fashionable, yet not frivolous; costly, yet not dandyish; in short, looking at him, you forget the dress in the wearer, which is the true secret of attire! He walks with grace, he is a thorough man of the world, accustomed to please men and charm women.

And one woman is evidently, at this moment, charmed with him. Julia, as he enters, gazes at him fondly, her troubles, her fears forgot, in the love which she still bears to him.

"Henry," she cries, springing into his extended arms, "I knew that you would come to-night."

"Why, ma belle, you do not suppose I would defer an appointment with you on account of such a trifle as the state of the weather? Ah, I love you better than you imagine."

"Ah, I have a request to make to-night that will try that love of yours, Harry," rejoins Julia.

"Ask what you will," replies Hericot; "ask anything that love should ask, and love will grant it. But first tell me how you have been this last week? Just to think—I have been absent from Paris and you, a whole week: in fact I would have been away even longer had you not insisted so particularly, in your last letter, that you *must* see me at once."

"Yes, Harry, I do wish to see you, and to ask you to—to—"

"But, dearest, first answer my question before you ask me another," interrupts Hericot, who, to tell the truth, does not seem anxious to allow Julia to come to her point at once. Perhaps he has an idea of what she wishes and seeks for a delay. "How have you been the last week? What have you been doing, darling?"

"Thinking of you, and of myself," replies Julia.

"Ah, darling, *which* of your two subjects of thought occupied the greater portion of your time, *myself* or *yourself*?"

"Harry, you know that, to my mind at least, these two subjects, as you call them, are but *one*. We love each other, do we not?"

"Of course we do, *Ma chère ami;* give me a kiss and make no more such foolish inquiries."

"Well then, Harry, there can not be two of us."

"So then, I am to understand that you have thought of me all the week."

"Yes, Harry."

"And strange to say, I have been all the week dreaming of you, Julia."

"Have you really, really now, truant. I had feared you might have forgotten me. Do not chide me for being silly, but you *do* love me *as much as ever*, do you not?"

"More, darling Julia, more, much more than ever."

The tone is fervent, is the *heart* so ?

"Oh, how happy you have made me by those simple words Then I am no longer afraid to ask you to—to—"

"But," again interrupts Hericot, who seems most desirous in vulgar but expressive parlance, to "dodge" the request that Julia has thus twice been on the verge of uttering, "how pale you look to-night ; and you have been crying, too. Silly darling—silly darling. Come, I must cheer you. You have called me, at different times, your 'admirable Chricton.' You say I sing well, play the piano skilfully, dance elegantly, talk eloquently, do all things well, in short ; this is your style of flattery, is it not ?"

"Nay, Harry, it is not flattery, but truth."

And, reader, truth it was. Hericot was not only one of the most elegant, but one of the most accomplished of men. Every social skill was his. All the arts of music, dancing, languages, etc., were his to a high degree of perfection ; and he used them as one great means to social and especially to feminine success. But to return.

"Well," rejoined Hericot, "whether truth or flattery, one thing is certain, I am accomplished enough to drive away your melancholy, and I shall proceed to do so without further delay."

So saying, he advanced to the piano close by, a choice Erard, and opening it, performed a magnificent aria, followed by a delicious waltz—one of Strauss' best. In vain did Julia protest that she was not melancholy ; in vain did she request her lover to be serious and to listen. Hericot seemed to be possessed with the very demon of "light music," and rattled off melody after melody. At last Julia, who was passionately addicted to harmony, forgot for the moment the weight upon her heart—even the demand she had to make—and lent herself to the influence of the music. She looked at her handsome lover ; she listened to the witching strains which he evoked. What to her was the rain without ? What was even the tumult of her soul ?

Love and music! Twin divinities, their charms were irresistible. She stood, in the pride of her swelling figure, with a bright light in her large, dark, deep-set eyes, and a passing flush upon her intellectual yet passionate countenance, while her lover with his elegant form bended gracefully over the instrument, occasionally looking at his companion with his winning and seemingly honest and loving eyes. Around was Splendor! Without was Storm, but within was Melody and Love!

But the excitement of the moment passed—reason and duty returned. And Julia at length found or rather *made* an opportunity to utter her request—the request of her life. She demanded of her lover—*marriage.*

He pretended surprise, but in reality he was not at all astonished. He had observed the change in Julia for some time past. He had expected just such a request as this to-day, and had endeavored, as we have seen, to defer it.

But Julia Witherson would not be put off. She told him in eloquent because heartfelt language her whole heart history. How she had been left motherless, and been cast upon the world of Paris guideless; how she had seen all around her false "religion" and spurious "morality" and open yet elegant "vice;" how she had been forced to witness many miserable marriages; how, when disappointed with the world, the specious reasonings of French and German infidel philosophers had charmed her till they had at last unsexed her; how he (Hericot) had confirmed her in these dangerous views, and had by his teachings made her what she was; how she had been honest even in her false views. But she also tells him how during the last year *she has had her eyes opened.* How she now sees the fatal error of their mutual creed; how she *now* believes in natural, if not revealed, religion, and has faith in the sanctity and value of marriage. She also tells her impatient listener (whose face is far from looking as smiling or as noble as it seemed a moment since) how she now regards their mutual relations; in short, she pleads for marriage—"By your love, your honor, your sense, my claims, by

our common hopes, I implore you to grant me this boon—to call me from henceforward by the holy name of *wife!*"

So cried Julia while Hericot replied, in his blandest tones, "Ma belle ami, do you know that you are talking nonsense."

Then Julia began a yet more vehement appeal, and solemnly demanded a solemn answer.

Then thus spake Hericot: "Well, Ma belle, if you *will* have me answer you, I love you as much as ever, more than ever, but I cannot marry you, indeed I cannot."

"Will not, you mean," said Julia, with flashing eyes.

"Now, macheré ami, do not put words into my mouth that I do not utter," was the cool reply (apropos, men always take matters of this kind very coolly). "I am not rich, and *am* a spendthrift; you are not really rich, though deucedly extravagant; therefore, pecuniary reasons forbid our marriage. Besides, I think of matrimony as you *once* did. I abhor its constraints. They are death to love." Hericot had *other* reasons for refusal, but these he did NOT mention.

Julia answered all the objections which he *did* mention, one by one. She pressed him hard, till at last, vexed by her persistence, thinking by a bold stroke to end the matter finally, Henry Hericot does a thing which he is very seldom in the habit of doing, he "shows his hand," in other words, gives to Julia her first and true idea of his real character. He mocks at her repentance, he jests at her new-found virtue, he tells her he has wearied of her, he refuses once for all to marry her.

It is all over. The revelation which comes sooner or later to every woman who loves "not wisely but too well," the revelation that the too successful lover no longer loves, that he who betrays will not atone, has come at last to Julia. The scales have fallen from her eyes. She sees him, herself, her past, present and future in their true light of scorn, shame and sorrow.

But *he* shall not see her woe. Rising with all the majesty and awful beauty of an injured queen, with proud face, swelling figure and flashing eyes, she points to the door of the magnifi-

cent apartment. "Go," she thunders, "and depart from me forever. Man, I loathe you; false lover, I hate you; betrayer, I curse you. May you never more know happiness or peace. Again I curse you. May your death be as terrible as you have made my life. Go."

And like a whipped hound, cowed by the awful dignity of his injured victim, the dashing, handsome Henry Hericot, looking unutterably mean, crawls, as it were, rather than walks out of the splendid room, out of the hall, out into the rainy night and the dark streets of Paris.

* * * * * * *

An hour passes and Henry Hericot is seen at the opera brilliantly attired and gay, very gay. He returns to his rooms at a late hour, humming the brindisi he has just heard. He reaches his lodgings, dismisses his servant kindly (strange to say, he is always very kind to his menials), and is left alone in his chamber.

"I could almost be tempted to believe in that foolish Bible," so runs his mental soliloquy, "or to imagine that after all there is a God, or to put faith in a tailor, or do any other wild thing, after Julia's strange conduct to-night. She certainly cannot be in earnest—impossible. She was only "shamming" to gain her point. I don't exactly understand that girl; but no matter. Damn it! I am tired of her. What did she ever love me for? I am sure I never loved her—not I. She is a fine, queer, romantic woman, with peculiar notions, which I have taken advantage of; but the idea of marrying her is absurd, perfectly so. Besides, I begin to find myself quite attracted by that charming Madame B——. I wish I had only been more bold to-night with Julia. I wonder if I *am* a coward. A boy told me so once; well, I shall not let the world know I am one at any rate. Now to bed."

And Henry Hericot slept as peacefully as though he had not sinned and murdered: sinned a damning sin and murdered a woman!!

For had he not really murdered Julia Witherson?

* * * * * * *

And what of *her*? When the door closed upon the handsome face and form of her once lover; when the sound of his voice was hushed into silence; then, when there was nothing save the lamp-light within the room and the dreary rain overhead; then, in uncontrolable agony Julia bowed her haughty head and burst into tears, scalding tears, which came from the depths of a deceived heart. Then she wildly raised her large eyes upwards, and exclaimed in spirit, like the holy one of old, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Her errors are now producing their fruit. This is the first installment of her expiation.

The rain rains on, the night drags on, the wind whistles, the sky continues starless, and still sits Julia, brooding over the embers of a deceived love and a destroyed hope.

* * * * * * * *

But there is a sorrow which is a joy.

There is joy in Heaven over one sinner that repenteth.

CHAPTER III.

SECOND LOVE.

NIGHT upon the ocean. And a noble steamer is cleaving the waters, on its way from the old world to the new. On the deck of the vessel stands Julia Witherson contemplating suicide by drowning. A year has passed since we last saw her. Her father has died and been buried in a foreign land, and she is now desolate in the sight of the world, and disgraced in her own eyes. Why should she live? One plunge and all is over. But the fit of temporary madness passes away; she has something to live for yet—Repentance and Atonement. For unlike the majority of her class, she believes that *Atonement and Repentance even for such as her are still possible.* She retires below, thinks and dreams disturbedly, and at last sleeps.

* * * * * * * *

By the will of the late Mr. Witherson, his daughter was entrusted to the care of a Mr. Russel, his brother-in-law, a resident of New York. Mrs. Russel, Julia's aunt, was glad to receive her niece into her family, and made our orphan heroine soon feel herself comparatively at home. Julia had of late greatly changed. She was no longer the gay, social butterfly, but a woman, dignified and reserved. Her only joys were her studies, which were of a very peculiar nature. Though she was what is technically styled "accomplished" and "literary," yet her mental bias inclined her toward abstruse and uncommon fields of intellectual labor; and thus in the "wild" and "extraordinary" she was enabled occasionally to forget the woes of the "ordinary" and the "practical." She kept herself aloof from the world, read, studied and sighed.

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We must now record one exception to Miss Witherson's general rule of social reserve. Mrs. B., of the Fifth Avenue, an intimate of the Russels, gave one night a grand party, and Julia, at the earnest request of her relatives, consented to attend.

Now we might here with propriety descant upon the Avenue and its attractions, upon society and its shams, upon parties and their follies; but we forbear. We are no Thackeray (would that we were), and so we pass on.

We might be very satirical upon the charms of brown-stone mansions, the snobbery of fashion, its godlessness and heartlessness, its mockeries of feeling, its polished deceptions, its carelessness of character, its worship of wealth, its mingled extravagance and meanness, its lies and slanders, its dandies and foreign counts of no account, its noisy chatterers and half-naked belles; but we will have mercy on our readers.

Julia looks very lovely, or rather very distingué. She is attired fashionably, richly, almost extravagantly, yet very plainly, tastefully and (what is very rare) *chastely*. No "low necks," no "short sleeves," no attempts at *seeming naked without exactly being so;* her dress is high in the neck, and answers for a *covering* as well as an adornment. Yet she cannot disguise the glorious beauty of her form; she cannot conceal the intellectual beauty of her face; she cannot hide the charms of her luxuriant hair and her magnificent eyes; she is, as it were, in her own despite charming. She does not converse much; her looks attract, but her reserve repels. She seems like one who has no interest in the social farce around her. She would far rather be alone with her books. Even now she *is* comparatively *alone* with her thoughts. Alas! She feels that she herself, like those around her, acts a part. Did the world with which she mingles but know her history, the fatal story of the last few years, it would cast her like a polluted thing from its embrace. But enough of this. Her uncle approaches her, and with him comes a young gentleman whom Mr. Russel introduces to his niece as Mr. Charles Singerly. No chance is given her to avoid the in-

troduction, even had she been desirous of so doing. She is fairly taken by storm. She had heard of Mr. Charles Singerly. She had read some of his writings, for he was an author of considerable note. She remembered her uncle's having described him as "a most handsome fellow," and as "a man of the highest social status and personal character." And old Mr. Russel was right.

Singerly *is* "handsome." His style of form and feature is remarkably classic, and decidedly intellectual. There is *soul* in his beauty; it is not the mere combination of physical elements, as in the case of Henry Hericot, but the physical seems to be the fitting exponent of the mental part. He is of moderate height and elegantly formed, with a large and most expressive dark eye, an exquisite mouth, a small hand, a musical voice, and is elegantly attired. The only remarkable feature of his dress is the amount of valuable jewelry he carries about him in the shape of watch, rings, breastpin, chains, etc. Fondness for jewelry has always been a passion with him, one of his few weaknesses. Still there is nothing in the least "flashy" about him. Every detail of his costume is characterized by exquisite taste. He is a thorough gentleman. Old Mr. Russel was also correct in his description of young Singerly's social status and personal character. Well born, inheriting a large property from his father, gay like all of his class, yet honorable and with education and talents of a high order, Mr. Singerly had already won a literary reputation, and had evinced mental powers and an originality of thought which prophesied for him a brilliant future.

He had seen Julia to-night at Mrs. B——'s entertainment for the first time, and had been instantly attracted both by her magnificent figure and her intellectual countenance And Miss Witherson, in the course of the conversation which ensues between herself and her new acquaintance, learns to admire him and to appreciate the fact that he differs in many respects most materially from the average specimens of the genus "young men" which infest modern "society."

They discuss together poetry and various intellectual subjects,

and Singerly details for his hearer's mingled amusement and edification a scheme of his for the training of poets, "rendering them self-supporting," as he phrases it (by the by a most capital scheme, if it could only be carried out).

"Why do you not realize your idea?" asks Miss Witherson of her companion.

"Ah, I have one great vice, Miss Witherson. I am very indolent. I sincerely hate work."

Singerly spoke laughingly; but he spoke truth. He *was* very lazy—he *did* hate exertion. And he was not only indolent but careless, especially in pecuniary matters.

"I should be sorry to believe even your own evidence against yourself, sir," replies Julia. As she speaks she raises her eyes and starts violently. Before her stands among the crowd a man whom she knows well, *too* well, Henry Hericot himself, whom she has not seen since the memorable night of their parting in Paris. Hericot bows to Charles Singerly, with whom he is very intimate, and, after a momentary hesitation, bows also to Julia. She is strongly agitated, but has learned self-control; it comes to her aid now. She acknowledges the salute with reserve, and Hericot, after a moment's reflection, and a laughing jest with Mr. Singerly, disappears among the dancers.

Julia feels as though she was stifling, but people must restrain themselves in fashionable society; and she soon recovers her self-possession, externally at least.

"You know my friend Hericot, then, Miss Witherson?" says Singerly.

"We have met," replies Miss Witherson, simply. Good God! they *had* met indeed!

At this moment a gentleman passes our couple, with a young lady leaning upon his arm. Both Julia and Mr. Singerly bow to the lady, addressing her as Miss Somers.

"You know Miss Somers, then?" asks Singerly of Miss Witherson.

"Yes," is the reply, "we have been comparatively intimate for some time."

It often happens that circumstances in society lead to a sort of intimacy between parties wholly unsuited to each other. So it is in the case of Miss Somers and Miss Witherson. Two persons more utterly unlike in their real natures it would be impossible to meet. With all her errors and her sins, Julia *is noble;* with all her orthodoxy, etiquette, and morality, Katherine Somers *is not*. Yet did the world know what we do of Miss Witherson, we fear that it would still adore the technically stainless and hypocritical Kate, while it visited with its heaviest scorn the technically stained but truly repentant Julia! Such is life!

Katherine Somers is a blonde, cold-seeming, cold-hearted, rather tall, rather slender, with pale skin, light eyes and thin lips; on the whole rather pretty. Her hair slightly auburn, falls in long ringlets, and her form is gracefully shaped; her arms, hands and feet are specially fine, consequently you will observe that her every attitude is so studied as to display the beauties of these members. She professes to be moral, most moral, modest, most modest; yet you perceive that her dress is fully as low in the neck and as short in the sleeves as any decent woman's dress ought to be—in fact, we think that a little *less* of the bust might have been displayed and modesty have been none the sufferer.

And to-night, at Mrs. B——'s party, Miss Kate Somers, with her cold eyes, artificial smile and complexion, with her arsenic, rouge belladonna, etc., etc., and her fashionably immodest dress (which Miss Witherson would not wear for worlds), flirts, discourses gossip, lies and slander, and in her secret heart curses this night when Julia has made the acquaintance of Mr. Charles Singerly. For this gentleman has long been an object of Miss Somers' special regard. Is he not fashionable and rich? An excellent parti? And what right has Miss Witherson to interfere with the matrimonial speculations of *her friend*? What right, truly?

Yet Miss Katherine is a pious, moral, virtuous lady of fashion, who would be of course in the eyes of *the world*

(mind, we say of the world, dear reader,) infinitely the superior of Julia. We wonder if God sees things in the same light in which the world sees them?

And meanwhile Mr. Singerly (who is of a most excellent family, whose merchant-father left him three years ago the sole possessor of nearly "half a million," with but a mother to support—who has received a capital collegiate education, who has travelled abroad, who has published a volume of very good and very successful poetry, and who is a noble fellow, though the young ladies call him "a little wild," and the young men style him "decidedly fast"), Mr. Charles Singerly, for whom Miss Somers, and all the women of his "set," have sighed in vain (and *not* in secret, either), is experiencing the first touches of a "tender passion." Julia has charmed him more than any other woman whom he has ever met; and the results of this their first meeting will be fully known only in the future. Does he imagine *what* she really is? Does he dream of the awful secret which shrouds her soul with horror? We trow not. Ah! it is well for us poor mortals that sometimes "we see through a glass darkly."

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A few days subsequent to Mrs. B——'s entertainment, Mr. Charles Singerly, during his morning's promenade down Broadway, encountered Miss Witherson, who was taking her customary walk for exercise. He joined her, and prevailed upon her to visit with him an art-gallery. In an hour or so they parted, mutually pleased. Spite her reserve, Julia could not help making a distinction in favor of Singerly. Suddenly, Charles discovered that Mr. Russell was a person worth knowing intimately; and, before long, our hero established himself as a visitor at his residence. Here he learned one new attraction that our heroine possessed. She was a magnificent musician, alike upon the harp and the piano, both vocal and instrumental. Music to her was more than an accomplishment, it was a solace from sorrow, a relief from study, a religion. And between Julia's singing and Charles' poetical recitations the evenings

passed rapidly away. Mr. Singerly was the possessor also of a stylish pair of horses, and before long he persuaded Miss Witherson to accompany him in his equestrian excursions. In short, Julia and Charles became intimate, and at last Charles learned to love Julia. Charles Singerly had been in his time "successful," as it is called, "with women;" during his collegiate career he had unguardedly accomplished the ruin of a beautiful young girl. To this last act, however, he looked back with sorrow, and his life for several years had been comparatively "moral." He was now searching for a wife, and his great desiderata for a partner were not so much money or position as intellect, and, above all, a *stainless character*. For it always happens the more "wild" men have been themselves, by so much the more are they exacting in regard to the immacculate purity of the women they intend to marry.

Now does it not seem a strange fatality that of all the women on earth Charles Singerly should fall in love with Julia Witherson? What strange mistakes we men *do* make sometimes!

And yet, after all, this mistake of our hero's was *not* unaccountable. In the first place, he had no reason to doubt Julia. Her secret was never suspected. Secondly, every man in love imagines his beloved one all that can be desired. But, thirdly, and chiefly, Charles had every reason to believe in the character of Julia from her everyday conduct and conversation. Having erred and repented, Julia was more cautious of the appearance of evil than even a woman would be who had not erred at all. Thus, it came to pass that, though stained, she appeared stainless; thus it happened that Singerly imagined that of all the women of his acquaintance, the most virtuous was Julia Witherson.

Charles loves Julia. *And does she love him?* This question we will now answer in detail. At her first meeting with him, our heroine was somewhat pleased, and by the attentions which he paid her subsequently she was both gratified and flattered.

For Singerly was no common man, and even a proud, reserved, sternly-intellectual woman could afford to unbend herself in his society. As she saw more of Singerly she was forced to admire him the more. He had weaknesses it is true. He was indolent in most things, careless in many things, somewhat dissipated, by no means pious ; but he was industrious and ambitious in literary pursuits, was at the bottom a man of thought as well as feeling, had no vulgar vices, had no meannesses whatever, and was possessed of a high sense of honor. Superficially, he seemed a frivolous man of the world ; really, at heart, he was a true man as well as a thorough gentleman ; a being at once of sense, talent, sentiment, and, withal, wit. Julia appreciated him at his real value, and often compared him, to his infinite favor, with her *once* idol, Henry Hericot. Still no thought of love or its possibility, as regarded Mr. Singerly, crossed our heroine's mind till it was casually suggested by a hasty remark of the envious Katherine. Having once entered Julia's mind, the idea, like Banquo's ghost, would not down. True, she did not love him, she could never love again, etc., etc., love to *her* was an impossibility ; but, at any rate, *he* might love her. This must be prevented, and so Julia would astonish Mr. Singerly by some sudden attack of dignity, reserve, and the like. But the fit was but momentary, and, to tell the truth, Julia soon found that she *could not* be *reserved* towards Charles. One day she heard that Mr. Singerly had been taken suddenly ill, perhaps would die. The shock she then received taught her a lesson. Disguise it as she might, she did love him, and love him truly. Charles recovered ; the sickness which had caused the revelation passed away, but the revelation itself remained. Strange, almost impossible, as Julia regarded the fact, yet fact it was, she loved for the second and last time ; loved truly, wholly, purely, and forever.

When she made this discovery of her love, her first determination was to resist and to conquer it—a brave but impossible resolve ! "I am not worth his love," she cried—"I am not what he deems me. I will crush his passion, for *his* sake as for

mine. He should love some better woman, whom he can marry As for me, marry I dare not. We must part forever, without an explanation. Explanations were out of the question." But at another time, she would exclaim : "Why should I throw away my chance of happiness? If he loves me, why should I not wed him? I have erred but have repented, and my future life will be as pure as that of any woman. Nay, I *am* pure. Cannot my present and my future redeem the past? As he dreams not of my heart's error, what matters it? Why should we both suffer? I will be to him the truest of wives? Yes, I will accept him, marry him, love him, forget the past, and, at last, be happy." Thus at times would speak her natural pride and her yearning love. And so "she halted between two opinions," and every day the mental struggle grew more intense. At last she resigned herself to the current of events, prepared to accept Charles whenever he should declare himself. Life to her now had acquired a new interest; though sometimes the black memories of the past arose like spectres within her, yet her soul's energies were consecrated chiefly to the joys of the present and the anticipations of the future.

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Change we now the time and scene. It is the middle of summer, and Charles and Julia are at Long Branch together.

It is moonlight. The heavens are blue and cloudless. The ocean seems like a sheet of restless silver; its vast breast heaves gently underneath its load of light; its whitened waves murmur softly and continuously upon the shining beach. They do not roar, these moonlit waves, they only ripple. Majestic Neptune seems to be appeased, and merely whispers as he kisses shore. Hundreds of gay and happy beings wander rejoicing in the passing beauty of the scene and night. Here and there among the groups we find an aged couple, but the majority of strollers are young, delighting themselves in their youth. And amongst this latter class are Charles and Julia.

They wander in a secluded portion of the beach. They talk in low tones, and their conversation is of poetry—that theme so

near akin to love. At last, in their stroll, they arrive at an arbor, belonging to a cottage situated at a considerable distance from the beach. Into this arbor they enter and seat themselves. And still they talk—talk of the sea, and Byron and Barry Cornwall, who have written of it, and of Moore, the poet of moonlit nights and of love. Then comes a silence, deep, delicious, and most dangerous—for in silence the *heart* speaks loudest.

> "Oh, they utter not a word—
> "But the beating of their own hearts
> "Is the only sound they heard."

And in these intervals of stillness their beings unite in thought and spirit—

> "Two souls with but a single thought,
> "Two hearts that beat as one."

At last the silence is broken—by whom? By Charles Singerly—and by what? By an abrupt but passionate declaration of love—a declaration long delayed by one party (delayed because, though brave as any knight of any age, he dared not risk the all of his heart upon an uncertainty), and as long expected by the other. But now the barriers of timidity are broken, the restraints of months are burst, and in most eloquent words, uttered in most musical tones, he tells her of his worship.

"Julia," he whispers, softly, yet, O God! how earnestly, "Julia, I love you. From the first hour I met you, you took possession of my heart. I have *fancied* other women before now, but I never truly loved until you blessed my longing sight. You must have seen ere this that you are the only woman on this earth to me. My fate is in your hands. I lay myself at your feet. Have I dared to hope in vain? Oh, no; it cannot be. You love me, do you not? For I adore you."

And the moon shines in upon them, and the everlasting murmur of the sea sounds in their ears. But the light is unheeded, and naught care they for "what the wild waves are saying;" for the star of love within the heaven of their hearts arises in dazzling glory, and the entrancing melodies of passion fill their

souls with harmony. The sea-breeze fans their faces, but they reck not of it; for the breath of affection is far sweeter than even the summer airs of ocean. And there in the arbor by the sea he tells her how he loves her. As he proceeds in his story he grows bolder; he winds his arm around her waist, and she does not chide him; he takes her hand, and it is not withdrawn; he implores her to answer him, and, without a word, she hides her face and her blushes upon his rapturous bosom. Thus he knows he is beloved. And as he clasps her in his embrace, and presses upon her lips the first kiss of love, he feels for the first time in his life what it is to be *really happy*. He blesses all things. He blesses the moon that beholds his joy, the stars that twinkle upon it, the sea that murmurs around it; he blesses God—and *her*, his Julia.

And she—how feels *she*? She can hardly herself answer this question. She is happy assuredly; for he is at last hers and she at last his. He, the admired, the talented, the handsome, the noble, desires no other joy than to be near her forever; and her heart swells alike with gratified pride and delighted love. For she does indeed love him, love him truly, devotedly; as passionately as (and far more purely than) she loved Hericot in the years gone by. She admires, trusts, respects and loves him as a woman should the man she hopes one day to call her husband. He is her all in all of life, and he is *hers*. Visions of future pleasures, dreams of a coming marriage, wifehood, and true womanhood, rise thick and fast within her soul. She feels how exquisite a thing it is to be beloved. Around them the night seems to grow lovelier; the air more balmy; the stars brighter; and the murmur of the sea more musical. She too is blessed.

And yet even in *his* embrace, even with his kiss upon her lips, even with his passionate avowal still sounding in her ears, the phantom of distrust that has so long beset her, the phantom of memory of the past and of despair for the future, this old phantom of her shame and sorrow, will not wholly disappear. The recollections of *another* love, and of, O God, a *former* error, glide

horribly through the hid chambers of her soul to-night, even to-night, the night of nights, the night in which a noble man has told her that he loves her.

But there is no skeleton with Charles Singerly. No phantom follows *him*. He loves and he is loved. And life is to him henceforth but a smile. He calls his Julia by every endearing epithet, he vows his whole existence to her service, he rhapsodizes with the wild extravagance which seems natural to passion. And then together, arm in arm, with many a tender glance at one another, they quit that sea-side arbor, forever consecrated in their memories, and walk along the moonlit beach, and return at last, though unwillingly, to common life and the "Hotel."

Love, Love, Love! What is there in life like love! And yet, how transitory a thing it oftentimes is. A beautiful dream. Charles and Julia, be ye happy while ye may.

CHAPTER IV.

"CONFESSION IS ATONEMENT."

CHARLES SINGERLY and Julia Witherson were now betrothed lovers. But their engagement was kept for a time secret, as Charles desired, like a fond son as he was, that his mother (who was at present travelling abroad) should be the first one to know of his happiness. But Mr. and Mrs. Russell suspected the truth, and were very glad of it (for Singerly was an excellent parti), and old Mr. Russell gave Charles a cordial invitation to spend some time with him at Fairview Cottage, his country seat on the Hudson. Our hero cordially accepted. Behold him now domesticated at Fairview Cottage.

The Hudson is the most charming of rivers, and Fairview Cottage was one of the most charming of country residences. It was surrounded with trees, one of which, a beautiful willow, close by the river, was an especial favorite, and was known as "the river tree."

It is the second day of August, hot but lovely, and Julia is sitting under her favorite tree, alone, for a wonder, and thinking. She is happy, yet *un*happy. Blessed in her present love, yet cursed in the memory of her past, which *would* obtrude itself; cursed in the knowledge there is and ever must be a fearful secret between herself and her lover. Naturally noble, she is averse to the meanness of even an implied deception! And yet she had no alternative. So even in her love, she was not altogether blest. Memory, memory, what a curse thou ofttimes art!

Awhile she sits beneath the river willow, thinking bitterly, and then, striving to escape heat and thought together, she betakes herself to a neighboring grove, and throwing herself upon a rustic but most comfortable couch, endeavors to sleep.

All around and above her invites to repose. Not a leaf of the surrounding trees seems stirring, there is no breeze; the very hum of the insects is drowsy; the songs of the birds are comparatively hushed; even the shadows are still; while the light clouds glide lazily along the calm heavens. It is an idle and an indolent time; and Julia, thrown in languid abandonment upon the green earth, her sun-bonnet lying at her side, her magnificent hair released from the confinement of the comb, closes her large, beautiful eyes in a delicious, semi-unconsciousness, banishing by her strong will all care. But just as she is sinking to slumber, she hears the sound of two voices, one of them her lover's. The speakers pass the grove, but see her not, they are conversing so earnestly. Julia, from her retirement, is alike averse to interrupt them (as Charles's companion is a stranger to her) or to listen. But she is compelled to do the latter; she cannot help it.

Her lover and his friend discuss politics for a brief space. Then they dwell upon that most interesting of earthly subjects, the weather; then they treat of various other topics. At length Julia hears her own name mentioned by Charles' companion, who congratulates our hero "on his success with Miss Witherson." Of course Charles disclaims all success, etc., but his friend says "that he is not to be deceived, but is well convinced that, whether publicly acknowledged or not, a private and satisfactory understanding exists between Mr. S—— and Miss W——." The conversation then glides into various themes connected with marriage, love, women, and the like. And at last her lover eagerly argues with his companion on a subject on which men often argue, *the purity of women.* She hears him say these words: "A woman has nothing unless she has character. All other gifts of head and heart are worth nothing. Think, my friend," her lover cries to his companion, "what were our feelings were our sisters stained! Think what were our feelings were the women whom we love dishonored! Think what were our emotions should we ever be husbands to light women. *It is chiefly because we know a woman to be pure that we*

adore her; and should she cease to be so, we would cease to be her adorers." Here the words grew fainter; the reply of Charles' companion ceased to be audible, the two gentlemen passed on, and Julia was left in silence—but not to sleep, not to finish her nap. Oh, my God, no!

Was it chance or the will of Heaven that had led Charles to speak such words as these in her hearing? Her emotions as she remained there in that beautiful grove were horrible. Yet, what could she do? Should she break her betrothal engagement with Singerly? Alas! they so loved each other! She must continue as she had begun. And then pride arose within her. She *had* repented, she *would* atone, she *was* now pure. It was best that he should remain forever in his blissful ignorance of her *past*. Her *future* would be all that he could crave. Pride conquered, and this noble, truthful girl must still bear her shame in secret, indirectly deceive her lover, and be adored by him under false pretences. She arose, and leaving the grove in its noontide beauty, returned to the house.

Julia endeavored to forget the words of her lover and the emotions which they had caused, but in vain. And Providence so ordered it that the subject was brought forcibly again to her mind the very next day, in a new and unexpected manner. Her lover going out for a ride, in which, on account of the heat, she had declined joining him, she betook herself once more to the river tree, taking from the hall table a volume to solace her retirement. On looking at her book it proved to be that rare treasure, an old novel. We use the term "treasure," advisedly. Old novels *are* treasures. Compared to most of the romances of the present day they are like a real gem contrasted with a paste imitation. They are racy, quaint, characteristic; intellectual adornments rather than literary abortions.

The particular novel now in our heroine's hands was of the sentimental order, but sensible withal. In course of half an hour Julia became interested in the story, and read on, like one refreshed.

And as she read she started. For her eye encountered the following passage, which, though found in an old romance, would have done credit to the heart of the most modern author. It occurred as a reflection of the writer, and ran as follows :

"Confession is atonement. Let not men or women imagine because they have committed one fault, therefore they are justified in perpetrating the additional error of deception. We can conceive of no crime (save murder, in which case only God himself can restore the life once taken) which *if once confessed is not more than half atoned.*

She read the words. Then, as if by an electric shock, she comprehended their full meaning, and their applicability to herself. She recognized, too, what she deemed to be the hand of Providence, teaching her in its own way. And now, with the clear, calm morning light beaming brightly upon her, softened in its intensity by the foliage above her ; on this lovely summer morn, we say, a new idea entered into her soul. An idea at which the reader may sneer as ridiculous, extravagant, or as impossible to be conceived by a woman. And yet which this woman *did* conceive. The idea, namely, of applying practically to her own case the words which Fate, Providence, or what you will, had just led her to read. The idea, in short, of *confessing her secret to her lover ;* of relieving her soul, at least, of the sins of concealment and deception, and of revealing to Charles Singerly the full past history of Julia Witherson ! "Yes," she criedaloud, though there were none to hear her, "I will not endure this load any longer. He shall know of my folly, my error. He shall hear, and from my own mouth, that I am *not* what he fondly dreams me. Nay, but he shall not deem me base either, for I am *not.* The same lips that tell him my *evil,* shall also speak to him of my *good.* He shall hear from me of my temptations, my dangers ; he shall hear of my sorrow, my struggles, my change of life, my reform ; he shall know what I am now, virtuous and loving ; he shall

know what I intend to be, most tender and most spotless. He will see that I have been more sinned against than sinning; he will read my heart aright. He is noble and will forgive—and love. If not, if he casts me off, why then; still well. I will at least win my own esteem, and respect myself. Aye, and he will be forced to respect me also. Better to deserve my own esteem, than to enjoy his love without deserving it. Yes, I feel the words are true. 'Confession is atonement.' If I fail in all else, I will at least in the eyes of Heaven wash out my error by confession."

She raised in strong emotion her eyes to Heaven, and at this moment she was really beautiful. Her large eyes were dilated with feeling, and her intellectual features were stamped with the impress of high resolve. And as she beheld the clear sky, and the smiling sun, and the summer beauty all around her, she seemed to accept them all as favorable omens, and as indices that Providence was auspicious to her noble resolution.

But all strong emotions are necessarily followed by reaction, by depression. And thus it was in the present instance. Her resolve began to appear to her, what perchance it has already appeared to the reader, extravagant and unnecessary. Why should a few words, in an old novel, a silly book, doubtless, so strongly affect her, and alter a momentous and deliberate resolution? Why, truly? "Let the book say what it would, it surely is *not* necessary for me to reveal what need never be known, what had better never be told. Mere confession cannot *change* my past, while it would certainly crush my future. For HE would cease to love, or would not wed me. Men are not such noble or such careless creatures as to overlook such an error as mine, while they would not comprehend my atonement. I will loose *him*, and with him all. He may not understand me enough even to continue to esteem me. And I *cannot tell him*. The mortification would kill me. My very woman-

hood forbids me." These arguments, and many others, equally cogent, which the reader can doubtless himself imagine without our stating them definitely in detail, passed through Julia's mind and combatted her nobler resolve.

Meanwhile the day advanced to noon ; the sky became somewhat clouded ; the glow passed away from Julia's countenance, and the noble light of resolution vanished from her eyes. She was in doubt. True pride struggled with false pride, the noble woman struggled with the woman of the world ; self warred with soul, principle warred with policy, and Julia was at strife with Julia. And as she sat under the river tree, intent upon the mental conflict, she noticed not that a man approached her ; she noticed not even that he quietly seated himself, with a smile at her abstraction, at her side. But when she felt a hand clasp hers tenderly ; when she felt an arm glide lovingly around her waist ; when she heard a voice, saying, in the sweetest tones of manly passion, "Dearest," that simple but most expressive word, "Dearest," then she looked up, and beheld, beaming upon her, the handsome face of her lover. He had returned from his ride, eager to rejoin his Julia, and, not finding her at Fairview Cottage, had sought and found her in this her favorite spot.

"I have had such a splendid canter this morning," he said. "It would have been perfect happiness if you had but been with me."

"Ah, truant," replied Julia, forcing a smile to her face, that he might not observe her agitation, "you did not think of me, I warrant you. What man on horseback ever thinks of a woman ?"

"Nay, rather say what man in love ever thinks of a horse? But what have you been doing during my absence? And now that I look at you, you seem strangely melancholy, nay, I could almost say even sad."

"Nonsense, Charles, you are in such excessive spirits this

morning that any one who is not so merry as yourself seems dull."

"Nay, Julia, dearest, a lover's eye is not easily deceived. Something preys upon your mind; something troubles you. Come, what is it? Tell me, darling. You know there should be no concealment between us."

"Concealment, Charles!"

"Well, if you object to the word, substitute any other. Come, out with your grief. Is your pet canary dead? or, has any other like horrible calamity taken place? Well, if you will not tell me, you will at least permit me to read to you. I see you have a book with you." So saying, Charles Singerly taking up the old novel, glanced over its pages. And now occurred what may seem to many a third special chance or Providence; for, among the first passages on which the eye of Charles Singerly happened to light, was the very identical passage relating to confession, which had caused such a struggle in the soul of Julia, commencing, Confession is atonement. To acknowledge error," etc. Struck with this passage, and presuming that Julia had not, perhaps, read it, Charles called her attention to it.

"Do you agree with the author in these sentiments, Charles?" The question sprung to Julia's lips quick as the lightning flash from Heaven, and most anxiously, anxiously as a criminal awaiting his doom, did she abide the answer of her lover.

"Yes, dearest," was the reply. "Yes, I agree with every word of this truly beautiful and noble passage."

"Let me read it to you, Charles, once more. Think upon every word, and tell me then on your honor, dearest, whether you endorse every sentiment. Tell me, for much depends upon it."

She saw her lover's look of wonder at her earnestness, and then hastily read the fate-deciding sentences from the old novel! Her voice was agitated with emotion, but she read, slowly and distinctly: "Confession is atonement. To acknowledge error is to demand, as a right, forgiveness. Concealment adds to guilt;

whereas an honest confession absolves crime and compels respect. Confession is atonement. Let not men and women" (these three words she read with especial emphasis) "imagine that because they have committed one fault, therefore they are justified in perpetrating the additional error of deception. We can conceive of no crime save murder" (these words were also particularly emphasized by the reader) "which, if once confessed, is not more than half atoned for."

She ceased to read, and her eye asked the question of her heart.

"The sentiments are, to my thinking, truly noble and nobly true," was the reply of Singerly. "I must read this work, which contains such glorious ideas."

"You adopt them then," asked Julia.

"Nay. I do not *adopt* them, dearest, for I have *always held them.*"

Julia smiled. All the flattering words of all the kings on earth could not so have charmed her as the simple, short answer of her lover. Her mind, agitated by its struggles, received his reply (though, of course, Charles' answer had been merely general; he had paid merely a passing attention to the passage she had read him, and if he had had the slightest idea of the application to be made of it, would have answered very differently)—her mind, we repeat, received his reply as a favorable omen; as a token that Fate was propitious to her nobler nature; as a sign that she might confess all, redeem her honor, and still preserve his love. All doubts as to her course were at once abandoned, and to her excited fancy the air, the leaves, the birds, seemed to whisper and to sing—"Confession is atonement." She determined to atone and to confess; and there and then, almost before she was herself aware, on that summer noon, beneath that old, giant tree, with her lover seated on the rustic bench beside her, *did she reveal her secret* to her astonished adorer, utterly unprepared as he was for so terrible a revelation.

She told him of her mother's death, her father's carelessness, her loneliness, her temptations, her own peculiar and dangerous

nature. She told him all. She also spoke of her repentance and her reform, and narrated the history of her heart and soul since she had known *him.*

She concluded as follows: "And now, Charles, at last you know me—what I have been, and what I am. I love you too well, I respect myself too much, to deceive you. I am proud, as you know; but my pride is *true.* I am *too* proud to be a *hypocrite.* The Being who reads hearts can alone know the depth of my shame, my sorrow, and my repentance. He alone knows the greatness of my temptations. He only knows the stainless purity of my present life, and the strength of my resolves for the future. I have not been what I should be; but *I am not what I have been.* I have proved my love by trusting you with more than life. At the expense of all the woman within me, it may be at the expense of your love itself, I have revealed to you all. It is love that has led me to make this revelation, love passing the common love of woman,—love, and a belief that you are not as other men; *that you will have nobility enough to appreciate me and soul enough to forgive me.*"

She ceased; and with dilated eye, from which spoke and sparkled her very soul, and with heaving bosom, she awaited the answer that was to decide her fate. Oh! the wild emotions that raged within her. Hope, fear, shame, pride, sorrow, satisfaction, and many other feelings, pervaded her; but the chiefest of these was the one destined most to be disappointed—*Hope!* The day had become clouded; the clouds were dark and dense, and seemed to preface a storm; but no tempest could rival the emotions in the breast of the astounded Charles Singerly. Had the earth opened at his feet, had the trees spoken, had the heavens fallen, had any impossible thing whatever happened, it would have caused him less wonder, less sorrow, less conflict of emotion, than the revelation he had just heard of *her* own shame from *her* own lips. His outward man, his form, his face, his eyes, gave every sign of agitation; but all were vain to portray the tumult within him. He looked like the man who, in the powerful phrase of a modern poet,—

"Foamed at God and died."

He seemed like one who could have cursed man, Heaven, earth, himself, and perished. It was not often that Singerly allowed his feelings to master him; but when they *did*, it was terrible. But soon this tempest of the heart subsided, and grief, bitter grief, was the pervading feeling. To a certain extent, he appreciated Julia. He saw her temptations had been great, while her nature and position had been peculiar. He believed she had repented, he felt that she had to a certain extent even atoned. That she loved him, every fibre of his heart proved to him; that she would be in the future all that a woman should be, he would take his oath for. But, as Julia had argued to herself, "Men are not such noble or such careless creatures as to overlook such an error as hers." And as Charles Singerly was but a man, the man within him reasoned that, be what else as it might, the fact was patent, that she *had* fallen.

"And shall I take her to my embrace knowing this? Shall a man have power to point at us both the finger of scorn? No, never. Shall I wed a woman whose past life I would fear to have known to the world? Shall I, who have so fondly dreamed of stainless purity, forever deprive myself of all chance of its realization? No—a thousand times, no." Thus he argued with himself, or, rather, these reflections rushed through his agitated soul. And, reader, if you do not agree in the justice of this reasoning, yet blame not Charles Singerly *too severely*. Remember what men, men of the world, even the very noblest of them, are in regard to women, and make every allowance for his fearful situation.

"Julia, Julia," such was his passionate exclamation, "I was prepared for, I could have endured everything but this. I could have borne poverty, sickness, scorn, toil, sorrow, even death for thee, or with thee. But to find thee *thus*, and to know thee *this*. To hear with my own ears from thy own lips that thou art—what I dare not name. This is indeed too much. I can appreciate thee; I can admire thee. Thou art more sinned against than sinning, Julia. Aye, more, the wild beatings of my heart, as I pronounce thy name—these tell me that I love thee still. No other woman ever has or ever can rival thee in my affections.

But all my lately-glowing hopes are dead within me. May you be happy, but I never can be. For we can never be what till this hour I fondly dreamed we ever would be to each other. Love may, love must remain, but marriage is impossible. To think that thou, my adored, my worshiped one art——. But I blame thee not. Pardon my foolish words. Great God! do all love dreams end as mine have ended? Farewell, Julia. Think not harshly of me; for I love thee still—shall always love thee—shall never love another woman; but I must never see thee more. Farewell. God bless you and me, for we shall be sad enough to need his blessing, Julia. Farewell—farewell forever."

He pressed one long, last, passionate, despairing kiss upon her forehead; he clasped her wildly, passionately, despairingly in his embrace; for one brief moment he gazed upon her as though it was his last permitted glance upon the glories of Heaven, and then—he was gone.

And the sky was now completely covered with dark and threatening clouds; the sun was hidden, and a storm was brewing; a peal of distant thunder was heard. Still Julia remained under the river tree, motionless as a statue, with the last words of her lover ringing in her ears, and his last touch still thrilling through every fibre of her frame. An indescribable chaos of emotions agitated her; but the chiefest now were the bitterness of sorrow and the disappointment of despair.

For a while she remained motionless. Then a sigh, full of untold meanings of grief, escaped her; and with that cry issuing from the depths of her heart, which always issues from the depths of human hearts in the hours of their anguish,—"Oh, God!—my God! my punishment is greater than I can bear," she returned to the house—utterly desolate.

* * * * * * *

A few hours subsequent to the scene just described, there was a terrific thunder storm. The rain came down in torrents, as though the very windows of Heaven were indeed opened. The thunder roared, like the voice of an angry Jehovah; the light-

ning flashed, like the glances of an Almighty eye. And while the storm raged, Charles Singerly (who on the plea of pressing business had at once left Mr. Russell's residence) was brooding gloomily over his disappointed hopes; and at the window of her room in "Fairview Cottage" sat a woman weeping most bitterly; her pride all forgotten, and only her shame, her love, and her despair remaining. The woman's name was Julia.

CHAPTER V.

A MAN CHANGES HIS VIEWS CONCERNING A WOMAN.

Two months have elapsed, and Mr. Charles Singerly is seated in his comfortable room, in his New York residence. Since his last interview with Julia he has in vain endeavored to banish its recollection from his memory. He has plunged anew into the vortex of fashionable society at various fashionable resorts. He has flirted with several "belles," and been for a while the favored attendant of beautiful women; but in vain. Memory still haunts him. Then he has devoted himself to dissipation; to wines, cigars, rides, "hops," supper parties, the card table, etc., etc., but still in vain. He is pursued by memory. Then, as a last resort, he has given up his time to literary pursuits. Always a devotee of poesy, which has ever been to him a refining delight, to which, in his gayest moods, he was glad to betake himself; always a student of literature, which in the midst of his wild life he had ever cultivated with reputation and success; he now devoted himself with double zeal to study, to thought, and to the charms of literary composition. But, alas! the spells of literature cannot change the heart; and *his* heart was full of Julia. And now he is seated in his comfortable room, with all the appliances of luxury around him, elegant furniture, numerous books, costly articles of vertu, and yet he is sad, most sad.

A step is heard approaching; and one of Singerly's most intimate friends, taking the privilege of intimacy, comes in unannounced upon his meditations. Charles hails the interruption with joy; he is glad of any relief to his "thick-crowding" thoughts.

"How have you been, my dear fellow?" says he, rising to salute his visitor. "I have not seen you for three entire days."

"Not my fault, my dear boy, not my fault. You have concealed yourself from public view during the whole of the period you mention. The 'club' has not seen you, Broadway has not beheld your handsome face. We imagined that you must either be sick or out of town. So I appointed myself a committee of one to examine into your condition."

"I am obliged to you greatly for your kindness. I am not sick as you see; I am not out of town, as I can demonstrate."

"Then you are clearly 'under the weather,' as the phrase goes."

"Well, to tell the truth, I am not as gay as I am wont to be. Wearied of dissipation, I presume, or of the weather; I scarcely know which."

"Oh, the latter, of course, Charlie; the latter, of course. Who can accuse *you* of 'dissipation?' Absurd. Absurd, very. True, you are the wildest young man in New York, so protest all the young women; but what of that? A false rumor, you know, a mistaken idea, eh, Charlie? But, by the by, now that I think, I *must* ask you, have you and Miss Witherson quarrelled? People used to say you were engaged to her."

"My dear friend," replied Singerly, with an affectation of nonchalance. "People now-a-days say anything."

"Yes, Charlie, but I and many other 'chums' of yours used to think that in this case people were in the right. But, at any rate, you do not visit her as much as formerly. Miss Witherson has become a perfect hermit; Kate Somers seems quite delighted; while old Mr. Russell, who evidently expected you to propose for his ward, is vexed, but pretends to regard the whole affair between you, whatever it is, as merely a lovers' quarrel, which will all come right hereafter."

"Indeed, Mr. Russell does me too much honor. But let us change the subject. How do *you* flourish? How is the amiable Miss A——, and the charming Miss B——, and the accomplished Miss C——, and all the rest of your thousand and one 'flames?'"

"Well, as we have only been separated three days, I hardly see the use of making inquiries which would have to include a much longer space of time."

"Pshaw, my boy, you are good for a flirtation a day, any time. Three days, three dear ones!"

"But, my dear Charles, you seem to forget that the season is hardly yet 'under weigh.' But, by Jove, my boy, I have something to tell you."

"Speak on without fear. Your king commands you," cried Charles, assuming a theatrical attitude.

"Thanks for the permission, sweet prince," replied his visitor, laughingly. "It concerns our mutual friend C——. Have you heard of the romantic adventure which has fallen to his lot? A romance in which a damsel figures?"

"Else how could it be a romance? But proceed; I am all impatience."

"Well, it is a rather strange story, and each one will have his own opinion of the merits of the course adopted by the principal actors. But brief let me be. Our 'mutual' C—— recently met a girl of respectable family, though somewhat below him in social position, not 'of our set,' you know, but very beautiful. C—— fell in love with her, was infatuated, in short, and would have married her, despite the difference of their respective stations, but for one thing."

"And what was that one thing?" asked Singerly.

"Why simply a strange confession that the girl one day made to him, after he had told his love. It seems she had been 'compromised' two years before she met our friend. She might have kept the matter secret, and become C——'s wife; but some romantic notions of honor led her, rather than marry him under

false pretences, to reveal all. Strange girl, was she not? but, damme, she must be a noble woman, though a queer one."

Charles Singerly, though his breast was agitated with emotion—though he felt as though a voice from Heaven had been speaking to him through the lips of his friend, presenting to him a case almost parallel to his own, preserved his self-control, and asked, in an indifferent tone, "And how did C—— act?"

"Oh, C—— gave her up. He loved her, and all that sort of thing, but he could not marry such a woman."

"And what do *you* think of the affair, and of C——'s course under the circumstances?"

Singerly asked this question quietly, but most anxiously; in his heart he felt as though his fate depended upon the answer. His friend he knew to be, though a "fast man," yet a man of sound sense, good heart, and a fine perception of honor; and, therefore, he awaited most impatiently the decision of this friend on a case so strangely like to his own.

"Why, Charlie," was the reply, "I think she was a fine girl, and if I had been in C——'s place, I really do believe I could have forgiven her all and married her. No one would ever have been a whit the wiser; and a woman like her would certainly have made as good a wife in the future as though she had never made a mistake in the past. We need not marry a woman for what she *has been*, but for what she *is*, and for what she *will be*. At any rate, C—— had no claim to be exacting; for a greater rake than he it would be difficult to find. And for the life of me, Charlie, though I am called 'wild,' and am no better than others, yet I *cannot* see why sin, as they call it, in a male is any *less* error than precisely the same sin in a female. Crime in a man is as great as crime in a woman. And I am certain that if women were to object, in their choice of husbands, to men who had 'raked it,' there would be damnably few marriages, that is all. There, now, I have talked out more virtue than I ever dreamed was in me."

Our hero made a brief reply to the above-given remarks of his friend, the dialogue was directed into other channels, and in a few minutes the visitor departed.

The whole conversation above given did not consume many minutes, and to judge by Singerly's manner, no one would have imagined the discourse to have been of more than ordinary interest. Yet, in reality, these twenty minutes were a memorable epoch in the heart-life of Charles Singerly. He felt that the judgment pronounced by his friend upon their mutual acquaintance, C——, would be the judgment which that friend, and every other honorable man, would pronounce upon his own conduct. He felt that the arguments of his visitor were correct. Julia's past *was* past; on earth it need never be known, and in Heaven it would be forgiven. She was indeed noble. And what right had he, Charles Singerly, who had himself betrayed others, to reject her? His sin was as great as Julia's, but his repentance and atonement were far inferior. His friend's words rang in his ears, and Charles Singerly began to ask his own soul solemnly whether the course he had taken, subsequent to Julia's confession, had not been a mistaken one? Whether he ought not to have married her? A mental conflict arose within him in regard to this vital point, which conflict was not ended in an hour, nor in a day, nor yet several days. With the details of this mental strife we need not weary the reader; his own fancy and heart can suggest them; but we will merely give the final result, as shown in the following scene, which occurred within a brief period.

* * * * * * * *

A beautiful October day is drawing to a close, and at the window of her room in Fairview Cottage sits Julia Witherson She has become somewhat thinner and paler since we saw her last; and her large eyes seem as though they had known what tears were lately. Her heart-history since her memorable scene with Charles Singerly has been very simple—wounded pride, love, and sorrow; these three have possessed her soul between them; of wounded and angry pride there has been much; of sorrow there has been more; but of love, stronger than either, there has been most. Now she sits thinking of that glorious night by the sea shore when first *he* declared his passion; then

she thinks of his last embrace under the river tree, and the eternal farewell that accompanied it; and then, moved by a strange impulse, she arises, leaves the house, and visits this same old tree, beneath whose branches occurred her great life tragedy. She sits again, for the first time since the scene, upon the rustic seat; and absorbed in bitter meditations, she notices not the lapse of time, neither heeds she the fact that the air is rather chill. She only feels that she is lonely and joyless forevermore, and that repentance, atonement, expiation of the most bitter kind, unenlivened by the light of human love or sympathy, must be hers till death. She longs to die. But suddenly a voice is heard beside her, a voice that banishes all thought of dissolution, and makes it sweet to live; a voice which she had feared she never might hear again. A hand clasps hers, a hand to her more than all the world's wealth beside; an eye gazes into hers, an eye to her brighter than all the stars of Heaven. The eye looks tenderly, the hand clasps lovingly. The hand and eye are Charles Singerly's, and the voice says,—"Dearest, forgive me; thou art nobler than I. I have returned never to leave thee more. Forgive me, and be my wife, my honored wife, dear Julia."

For a moment, a brief moment, there is a struggle in Julia's breast. Pride, at once her blessing and her bane, spoke evil things within her—"He cast thee off once; it is thy turn now." But the wonder of joy and the ecstacy of love soon conquered the proud demon. *He* had returned to her—he loved her still—he *honored* her—he sought her for his *wife*. Her heart was full; she could but utter the simple word "Charles," then hide her head on his breast and weep delicious tears. Thus on the same spot where their love was broken it is renewed; on the same spot where her dishonor was proclaimed her honor is now restored. And the October evening more than atones for the August noon.

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Our readers, both male and female, will probably entertain various views concerning the prudence and policy of Charles'

course in taking Julia again to his heart, and offering her marriage, after knowing her to be what she has confessed being. Each one has his own or her own way of regarding these things. But one thing is certain, whether Singerly acted wisely or foolishly, he at least behaved nobly, with an originality as rare as it was honorable to his higher nature.

We justify him ; others may censure him ; but *all* must admire him.

* * * * * * * *

Charles and Julia, after their mutual errors, their mutual repentance, their mutual discipline of experience and sorrow, are at last united in a happy and virtuous attachment. "Poetical justice," as it is called, or the general rules of romances, might now leave them to be happy. But, alas ! this world is not a romance, and Charles and Julia have still much to undergo. They must be further purified by affliction ; new truths, new lessons, must yet be illustrated in their lives. Therefore we exclaim now,—"Charles and Julia ! be ye lovers while ye may."

CHAPTER VI.

A LETTER FROM A MOTHER.

In one of our preceding chapters we alluded to Singerly's mother, who was traveling in Europe. She had been abroad over twelve months, and had visited England, France and Italy, and was now expected home. She had gone in company with a large party of friends—her son, on account of some important business matters connected with his father's will, being unable to accompany her. Charles had often spoken of his mother to Julia, who had learned, by the description, to love her; for in the eye of our hero his mother was the most perfect of created beings—no son ever loved a parent more dearly than Charles his mother; and this affection was fully reciprocated. A constant correspondence, as frequent and as regular as circumstances would permit, was maintained between the parties during their absence; and, of course, in these letters the subject of Charles' engagement was mentioned, and his mother had sent back a loving reply to his first joyful letter communicating the intelligence; which will come more fully under our notice shortly. Suffice it to say, that this reply supposed, of course, that Charles had chosen a wife alike religious and spotless; for a consistent "profession of religion," and a reputation utterly free from suspicion, were, in Mrs. Singerly's eyes, the *sine qua non* of a wife for her son. Suffice it to say, also, that Charles, though wholly unused to concealment, especially towards his mother, after a struggle with himself was obliged, by the necessities of his position, to determine to allow her to remain in utter ignorance of the fact, that his chosen loved one lacked alike the religion she required and the stainlessness she adored. He felt now that through life he would have

to keep at least one vital secret from his worshiped mother; that in at least one respect he would, as long as he lived, be compelled to deceive her.

Mrs. Singerly, as will be more fully seen hereafter, was a pure, sensible, strong-minded, loving, good woman; but she was also bigoted in religious or church matters, and decidedly "strait-laced" in regard to female morals and decorum, consequently she was an inconvenient personage to be intrusted with such a secret as that of Julia's.

One day, in the early part of November, Charles had been paying a visit to his betrothed in the afternoon at Mr. Russell's town residence. While there, having occasion to produce something from his pocket, he had accidentally and without either himself or Julia observing it, dropped a letter. Some time after he had taken his leave, Julia, passing through the apartment, observed, this letter, ignorant, of course, what it was or where it had come from. She stooped to pick it up, and as it had no envelop she glanced at the writing, which was remarkably like that of a friend of hers, so, taking for granted that it was some note from her friend which she had carelessly dropped, she thought she would spend a moment or two in reperusing it; and approaching the window, leaning against the wall, glanced over the pages. The light was growing dim, but there was enough for her purposes. She was soon aware that she had made a fatal mistake in her suppositions in regard to this letter: it was not hers; it was not from her friend; it was an epistle belonging to Charles Singerly, and written to him by his mother—by her future parent; and its tenor was of her. She, the future wife of the writer's son, was the subject of this letter. Having read a few lines, sufficient to give her, before she was aware, an idea only too true of the nature of this epistle, she felt an irresistible curiosity to continue its perusal; she felt as though her fate lay in its words, and she read on.

The letter was not a long one, but it was full of the character of the writer; it showed her deep love for her son, his intense passion for her; it evinced the perfect, entire, unreserved

confidence that had ever existed between them; it proved the writer to be a truly loving and good woman and a true mother. The letter then proceeded as follows : "Give my love to Julia, my daughter; for she is my daughter. Charlie, I have taken her to my heart already, for she, I know, is, must be, as lovely as she is pure; else would she not be a true woman, nor capable of being a true wife, and else would not you love her. I have often dreaded your marriage, for I was fearful that you might, some day, love a woman unworthy of you. And words cannot tell you, my dear son, how great would be my agony did I see you linked to a woman on whose character the slightest stain could rest. Better be dead than unhappily married. And were I myself dead, and were you to wed an unworthy woman, I verily believe I would arise from my grave." In another part of the letter occurred this passage :—"There never has been any concealment between us, my dear son, and I know there never can be. Could I imagine that the time would ever come when 'a secret' would lie undisclosed between us, I would be most wretched; and I know you too well to suppose that you could be happy so long as any concealment on any important point existed between us."

(Our readers can well imagine why Charles had never mentioned to Julia the receipt of this, and similar letters, from his mother.)

Julia read and then various emotions agitated her. She seated herself on one of the luxurious sofas by the window, near which she had been standing while perusing the epistle, and abandoned herself for a moment to her feelings.

The dim, dreary, waning light that entered the room from without, was strangely in unison with her sensations. Admiration for the character and sentiments of Charles' mother, as displayed in the letter she had just read, and love for the writer, because the writer so loved *her* lover; these were mingled with sorrow that she was so unworthy of the praises bestowed upon herself, and with deep regret, aye, loathing, at the thought that she must hereafter be loved by Charles' mother for the very quality she *does not possess*.

Julia also experienced deep sorrow when she thought, that from her peculiar position, she would be forever the cause of at least *one* vitally important secret existing between this son and mother, who heretofore had had no concealments or deceptions between them. Charles, at least, on one point must deceive his mother; and that point his own wife! The thoughts of these necessities of her position were agony to the truth-loving Julia. And yet what *could* she do? Her early error was bringing in its foul train still further punishments. And as she gazed through the window into the dim street, with an unchecked, bitter tear in either eye, little did the passers by dream that within that lordly mansion, with its brown stone front, there beat as unhappy a heart as ever throbbed within a hovel. The light grew fainter and fainter, and evening had fairly set in; the servant entered the parlor to light the lamps, but Julia dismissed her; she wished to remain in a congenial darkness.

But suddenly a new idea took possession of her soul. An original, absurd, useless idea, the reader may call it, but at any rate it entered into her soul. "Why not *confess to the mother as well as to the son*? Why practice deception and concealment to the former more than to the latter? Why not be as truthful and as honest to the parent as to the lover? I have overcome the prejudices of the one, why not those of the other? This course would be the noblest, the truest, and therefore the course most worthy of me. It would be also a further step in my atonement. Even being rejected by the mother, but with no concealment or deception between us, would be better than being loved by her under false pretences." Various other arguments, or what seemed to be arguments to her excited fancy, in favor of this course, flashed across her mind. Her eye kindled with enthusiasm. She rose from her seat, and paced the richly carpeted floor with a proud step; she felt like a queen, like a warrior about to gloriously conquer in a glorious cause.

But all this excitement was followed by the inevitable

reaction, and soon this idea of hers began to appear less plausible, less necessary, less noble, even, and far less likely of success.

All the various arguments *against* its adoption (which arguments we can safely afford to leave to the reader's sense and fancy to imagine) crossed her mind in quick succession. The glow faded from her face, the sparkling light no longer kindled in her eye ; she resumed her seat, a prey to doubt and a host of conflicting emotions.

At last her mind was made up. "I will not *now* determine upon my course whether of continual concealment, or of confession. There is time enough before me ; I will await the return of Mrs. Singerly from Europe, which is expected in a week or two, and ascertain her character from personal observation. I will think the matter over carefully, and conscientiously ; will consult what is best, and most fitting for all ; I will consult alike principle and policy; I will meanwhile say nothing to Charles, and at last I will definitely determine whether to confess all, or to conceal all forever."

There, in that dark parlor, with no companion save her own soul, and with no light save that which the street lamp afforded, for the starlight of heaven could not reach her in that lordly room ; there, on that luxurious sofa, with all the appliances of her uncle's wealth about her ; there and then, on that November evening, did Julia Witherson make a solemn vow, to the effect above stated, and there and then was this vow, of an erring but noble spirit, registered by the recording angel.

CHAPTER VII.

A WOMAN CONFESSES TO A WOMAN.

In due course of time Mrs. Singerly returned from her European tour, and Charles took the earliest opportunity of making her acquainted with his betrothed. And Julia soon learned to love Charles' mother, who in her turn reciprocated the affection. Mrs. Singerly was a "little woman," ladylike in her appearance and elegant in her dress and manner, with an expressive face, which, though sedate in its general look, could beam most tenderly upon those she loved; and beam it ever did upon her son, her almost worshiped Charles. We doubt if, in her own secret heart, she did not really believe that "her boy," like the king, "could do no wrong;" even his non-profession of religion, even his dissipation, though they pained her, could not sever the least of the tender ties that bound her to him. As for Charles, his mother was his idol. We have just stated that Mrs. Singerly soon learned to like, even to *love*, Julia; not only for Charles' sake, but for her own. Our heroine, it is true, was not religious; but (as she had always, since her return from France, veiled from view her sentiments of doubt, had complied, to a certain extent, with the orthodox forms of the church, and as she had at heart a deep abiding sense of natural religion,) Mrs. Singerly was not aware of the extent of her deficiencies in this respect.

Julia's intellect also charmed Mrs. Singerly, who was an admirer of talent; though she often wondered at the strange character of the studies to which her son's betrothed had devoted herself. Her noble sentiments, also her music, conversational powers, her personal appearance, her generosity in pecuniary matters, her independence, her courage, her fascinations; above

all, the knowledge that Charles loved her, and the firm belief that her character was as spotless as the new-born snow; all these were reasons why Julia won the love of Charles' mother. And our heroine learned to love Mrs. Singerly for her purity, her true religion, her real goodness and kindness of heart, and most of all, because she was the loving and beloved parent of her lover. And for awhile the betrothed couple and their mother were united and happy. But in the depths of her soul Julia still remembered her recent vow; her determination soon and finally to decide upon permanent, thorough and lasting concealment, or full and open confession; and many were the struggles within her in regard to this matter; struggles of which her lover knew nothing; struggles known only to God and to her own soul; struggles which the mother, that all-important personage, never so much as dreamed of.

* * * * * * * *

It was a beautiful afternoon in the month of December: one of those mild afternoons with which winter favors the earth occasionally to remind it of the summer that is past, and to cheer it with hopes of that which is yet to come. The air was balmy, the sky cloudless, and all nature, so far as it could be visible in a city, seemed rejoicing. And at the window of one of the rooms in her elegant mansion sat Mrs. Singerly thinking. Her thoughts were pleasant ones, judging by the smiles that occasionally crossed her lips; aye, pleasant thoughts they were truly; for she was musing on the happiness that awaited her son, her darling Charles. "He has made a worthy choice," so her meditations ran; "he has found a lovely, pure and talented woman, who, though not now quite as religious as I could wish, loves him dearly. She will be to him, doubtless, a good and faithful wife, and to me an affectionate and fond daughter. Charles will 'settle down' in life, and will surrender those wild courses which have pained me so much, and which, for my sake, he has so often struggled against. He will become the head of a family, a fond husband and father; and I," here the old lady smiled as the suggestion crossed her mind, "I will be-

come a 'grandmama,' a doating grandmama, to some curly-headed, mischievous little cherub." Then her thoughts took another turn. "By the by, supposing I was to pay Julia, my daughter, as she soon will be, for Charles, the impatient rascal, has already prevailed upon her to 'name the day;' supposing I was to pay her 'a call' this afternoon, an unexpected, informal affair. She will be pleased, I know, and then I shall have a chance of seeing Charlie, too; for I am certain the fellow is with her at this very moment." So Mrs. Singerly proceeded to act upon her own suggestion, and attiring herself hastily, with better spirits than she had known for many years, she departed to pay a visit to her future daughter-in-law. Little did she imagine what would be the momentous consequences of her visit. Ah! little, truly, do we creatures of a day know what an hour may bring forth!

On reaching Mr. Russell's door she met his youngest child, a little girl of some six or seven years. Asking the child, she ascertained that Mr. and Mrs. Russell were out, but that Julia and a gentleman were "in the parlor." Smiling, as she thought who "the gentleman" was, she took the privilege of intimacy, passed through the open entrance-door, and entered the parlor; but to her surprise the room was vacant. She ran back to inform the child of its mistake, but the child, too, had departed. "I will wait a moment," thought Mrs. Singerly, "they will make their appearance presently, and I will agreeably astonish them." So she returned to a seat near the window; and as the shutters were partly closed, her form was thrown somewhat into the shadow. Now the parlor was a double one, with folding-doors between the two divisions, and one of these folding-doors, next to the side of the room at which Mrs. Singerly was seated, happened to be drawn full across its share of the entrance; so that, as the light was equally dim in both parlors, a person seated in the one room could not perceive a person seated in the other on the same side. Mrs. Singerly had not been seated many moments before two persons entered the back parlor, of course utterly unconscious of the presence of any third

party ; and by their voices Mrs. Singerly recognized them to be the very ones she wished to see. She rose quietly, and was about to "steal a march upon them," when suddenly she heard them utter words, words of fearful import, which at once deprived her of all mirth, and even of strength to enable her to render her hearers aware of her presence, so greatly was she grieved and astonished.

"Nay, Charles," said Julia, in reply to some previous remonstrance of her companion, "it is vain for you to endeavor to alter my resolution. I shall never be truly happy, or truly honorable, until I have told your mother all ; until she knows me to be what I really am ; until she is aware of my erring past. I determined upon this step weeks ago, ever since I read by accident that letter from your mother ; that letter which I handed to you the next day, and which, as you supposed, I knew naught of its contents, you were so unwilling to talk to me about. But I determined not to take a fearful step, like this confession, lightly. I determined to study my own heart, you, and your mother ; I resolved to be guided in my decision by feeling, prudence, but chiefly honor and principle, for honor and principle alone can render me worthy of your love. I said naught to you on the subject for many reasons. But now I *have* seen, I have studied, *have* reflected, and I have *determined.* I must tell all to your mother."

The revelation to Charles, of which these words were part, of the thoughts and designs of Julia in reference to his mother, not only came on him as a new idea, upon which he had not hitherto thought, but as an idea which placed him in a most embarrassing position as to how to advise or act. He ardently desired, on general principles, that no concealment should exist between himself and mother ; and it certainly was Julia's most noble course to reveal all. But, on the other hand, it was certainly not absolutely required by honor, that Julia should make any further confessions, which certainly would tend to separate them forever. There

were other reasons, too, against confession, and therefore Charles opposed Julia's resolution.

"Nay, Charles, say what you will, a full confession to your mother of my early temptation, my early error; such a confession, alas! as this accompanied, thank Heaven, by a statement of my repentance, my atonement; such a confession, Charles, is my noblest course, and should therefore be taken for honor's sake; it is the course most worthy of better nature, and should therefore be taken for my own true pride's sake; it is the course most bitter and most difficult, and should therefore be taken by me for the sake of expiation and atonement. I have seen lately how the idea of having a vital secret that you dare not disclose to your mother has affected your happiness; I have wearied receiving constant praises from your mother for the possession of that to which, in *her* sense of the term at least, I can lay no claim. Think you I shall be happy if I become your wife and her daughter at the expense of your peace of mind, your filial love, and her deception?"

"But, Julia," interrupted her distracted lover.

"Nay, Charles. I only must now speak. Something tells me, too, that my confession will be, even practically and as a matter of policy, the best thing hereafter for us both. The secret instinct of my soul assures me this: your mother loves you fondly; she likes me; she has a noble heart, a heart that can understand and forgive. For your sake, for mine, and for the sake of her own noble heart, she will pardon my great but my early error, so bitterly repented of. You have pardoned me; why should not she?"

"Ah, my Julia, the cases are not similar"——

"Grant that they are not," replied Julia; "assume tha the worst that can does happen. Still I will repent me not of my confession. I will be acting rightly, proudly, repentantly and nobly. Even your mother, despite herself, will be forced to respect me, esteem me. I will be able at last to respect myself. I will teach the world, at least my world,

that spite of heartless doctrines and hideous sneers, a woman may sometimes stray, yet not be utterly lost, may still repent, and still atone; in short, that a woman may be 'erring, yet noble.'"

And as she thus spoke, Julia was truly beautiful, a worthy physical exponent of the glorious truth she uttered. Her eye flashed, her head was elevated, her neck proudly arched, her form dilated, her bosom heaved magnificently; and though the room was dark, there almost seemed to be a light around her—at least it seemed so in her lover's eyes. But to her lover's ears, alas! her words sounded like the knell of hope, and as he gazed upon her in the waning light she seemed to him like a treasure forever lost. But see—she starts. In her excitement she has advanced towards the adjoining parlor; and suddenly her eye has discerned a third person; rushing forward, a startled exclamation from her lips informs the astonished Charles that his mother is present, and has heard all—she *must* have heard it. It is beyond the power of any ordinary pen to do full justice to the emotions of the various parties to this scene. Julia feels that she has unwittingly revealed the secret of her life to the mother of the man she loves, and that the crisis of her fate is reached. Charles is agitated with conflicting sentiments that overpower him; the mother, whom he reveres and worships, is possessor of a fatal revelation that concerns his peace and that of the mistress whom he loves and adores, while the mother herself is swayed to and fro by the strong currents of opposing feelings.

There in those darkening parlors are the three who are nearest to each other, and dearest; the three who have a dreadful secret amongst them, that threatens to sunder them forever. There they are, in the dim parlors, on that December evening, gazing into each other's faces. There stands Julia, with pride and shame struggling for the mastery on her expressive countenance; there sits the mother, looking alternately on her son and her (would-be) daughter; while between them stands Charles.

For a moment none of the three dare break the silence ; their hearts are far too full to suffer their lips to speak. At last the mother opens the momentous conversation :

"Miss Witherson, I have overheard by accident strange words—words of fearful meaning. Are they *true?* But it is needless to ask that question. The peculiar circumstances under which I have heard them do not admit of a doubt on this point. Miss—Miss Witherson, I know not for what to take you."

" Take me, oh, take me, dear madam," cries Julia, in tones of passionate entreaty, which have no pride in them now, only tenderness and sorrow, " take me for that which I am—a woman who has erred under most peculiar temptations, but who has repented and forsaken her errors ; a woman who has fallen, but who has also risen ; a woman who loves your son and you."

And then, with all the inimitable and almost resistless eloquence of true feeling, she narrates her story. She speaks of her strange nature ; her motherless condition ; her Parisian education ; her temptation ; her fall ; her change of views ; her struggles ; her desertion by her false lover ; her sorrow, repentance, shame ; her sincere love for Charles, and her full and honorable confession to him. She then speaks of the love she bears to *her,* the mother of her Charles ; and gives the reasons that caused her to resolve to confess all rather than deceive her.

Then Charles, in eloquence little inferior to Julia's, pleads *for* the woman he loves *to* the mother he loves ; he says all that a lover, a man, or a son can utter under the circumstances.

The heart of the sedate, dignified Mrs. Singerly beats more rapidly now than it has beaten for many years. She would die for the happiness of that son, who is clasping her hand and gazing so fondly, yet so anxiously, into her face. She cannot but pity the sad history and even admire the *true honor* of that lovely but ill-fated girl, whose large eyes would weep doubtless were not her feelings far too deep for tears ; but PREJUDICE can not be eradicated in a moment ; education and habits of thought cannot be changed in an hour.

And now, in that dim room, into which the faint light drearily steals, the mother speaks words which sound like the fiat of eternal judgment in the ears of the listening lovers.

"Miss Witherson," she says, and her words are distinct and firm—her agitation is over,—"I have heard your story with wonder, with pity, with a large degree of respect. But you will pardon me when I say that, by your own showing, you are not the woman the world supposes you to be; you are not the being I had fondly imagined you; you are not, in short, (pardon me if in my plainness I offend you), such a wife as I desire for my son. I wish you well; I trust you may obtain every happiness; but I must and do withdraw my consent to your union with my dear and only son. Your union is impossible; it cannot take place."

The words are spoken. The words that are meant to separate her from her loved one forever. And there and then, in that darkening room, Julia feels most fearfully how great is her heart's darkness. She *seems* calm; but she feels now hot as fire, now colder than ice; for pride contends with shame, while sorrow overpowers both emotions. She raises her head, and strives to appear like the haughty Julia of times past, but in vain.

And Charles' emotions are by no means enviable. He feels the justice, the worldly and accurate justice, of his mother's decision; and yet his love for Julia is so great, he had dreamed so many delicious dreams concerning her, he experiences such horrible despair at the prospect of losing her, that his whole soul revolts at the idea of parting with her. And suddenly the thought crosses his mind—it was the first and last time such a thought ever occurred to him; it was a thought that could not have entered his imagination, saving at a moment of intense excitement such as the present—the thought of disregarding his mother, and wedding Julia at all hazards, with or without his mother's consent.

While this idea agitates his soul, Julia, whose nerves have been strung to the highest tension, suddenly bursts into tears

It is merely a physical, not a moral, weakness on her part; but the sight of these tears excites Charles almost to madness.

He rushes to her; he folds his arms around her; he calls her his own; he kisses her passionately, and exclaims:

"No human being shall part us; no mother shall sever us; thou shalt be mine and I thine, Julia, despite the world."

For a moment Julia remained encircled in his loving embrace; and she is tempted to take him at his word. Why should a third party, be she whom she may, separate two souls who so dearly love each other? Why not disregard the mother and receive the son forever? Various reasons why she should so do flash across her mind. But she raises her head and sees that tears of sorrow are in the aged eyes of Mrs. Singerly; tears of sorrow at the disrespect and threatened disobedience of a loving and beloved son, and, at the sight, Julia's nobler nature conquers. She disengages herself from the arms of her lover, and says to him simply, tenderly, but firmly and proudly:

"No, Charles. Much as I love you, I can not, will not wed you, without the consent of your mother. My own honest pride, (thank God I *have* a right still to cherish an honest pride in *this* matter at least,) forbids me. We could enjoy no true happiness together were I the means to part you from your only parent, she who so tenderly cares for you—*I will force her to forgive me, to respect me yet.* But against her will I will not wed you, Charles."

The lovers' embrace is broken—and Charles and Julia, like their future lives, are now apart.

Then occurs a brief but most expressive *silence.* Each of the three actors in the scene is occupied with his or her emotions Slightly altering a famous couplet—

> "There was silence deep as death,
> And the saddest held their breath
> For a time."

During this interval of stillness the growing darkness of the room is strangely, strongly in keeping with the deepening mea-

tal shadows that are thronging through the chambers of their souls. And though past the mansions, through the streets of New York, there go to and fro hosts of beggars, we doubt if any member of this wretched class is half so sick at heart as are the three who breathe here heavily in this darkness and this silence.

But at last Julia breaks the pause. She has looked at the worst—is prepared for it—and now endeavors to anticipate its action. All is over. They must part. Let them part then at once.

She turns to Mrs. Singerly. "Madam," she says quietly, "we must end this unexpected and alas! most unpleasant interview. You know my secret—you will of course respect *it*—if not *myself*. I speak no more of my sorrow, of my humiliation—my pride will not stoop to any alliance that satisfies not the *family* of the man I love. The time may come, madam, when you will do me justice. Your image will ever live in my memory as that of one whom I *could* have loved."

The words of our heroine may sound somewhat harshly and proudly—but remember, reader, that Julia *had* humbled herself—and in vain—is she not pardonable therefore in her resort to her last refuge, her pride?

But to Charles her manner is full of a most exquisite tenderness. She offers him her hand, and when he not only takes the hand, but clasps her wildly, passionately to his breast, she gently disengages herself, and kissing his forehead, she bids him farewell.

"Charles," she says, "I shall ever love you—but I may never marry you. I shall never wed another. You are the only man whom I have ever really loved—the first and the last of my heart. But I release you from all ties to me. You are free to find some woman more worthy of your love than I have been or can be. If you find such a one, be happy with her; and remember me only as one who owes her noblest qualities to her love for you. Farewell. Farewell. I had dreamed to redeem in the happy character of your wife the errors of my fatal past—but my dream was not to be—it should never have been. I

shall henceforth live not for love but for repentance. The time may come when your mother shall better understand me. The time may come when the world may learn that a woman may be 'erring, yet noble.' Farewell, Charles. Good-bye, dearest, and heaven bless you."

The last sentence is uttered in a tone of the most musical tenderness, which rang in its hearer's ears for many months after. But there is no reply. Mrs. Singerly was silent. She loved her son; her withdrawal of her consent to his union was dictated chiefly by her view of his best interests; still she felt in her own despite, how noble Julia was. Charles was silent. What words could have spoken fitly his emotions? And Julia, to end this soul-harrowing scene, rings the bell for the servant to bring in a light, and instantly at the menial's entrance the parties became mere men and women of the world; mere "ladies" and "gentlemen" with whom any show of feeling is inadmissible. And Mr. Charles Singerly and Mrs. Singerly take their leave of Miss Julia Witherson *politely!* For the servant stands in the hall. But spite of social habit, spite of servants, passion would have its way, and unperceived, Charles gave Julia one last, clinging, passionate clasp; one last, long, passionate kiss; whispered to her, "There must be a heaven where we shall meet again, if on earth we cannot;" and—was gone.

The door closed upon the mother and son; the stars shone here and there in the sky; the lights were lit in the parlor, but love and hope had departed forever from the breast of Julia.

NOTE.—Doubtless the reader has already deemed them very strange, these numerous (and perhaps many would call them needless) confessions by our heroine. It may seem very unnatural that a woman should reveal, without any direct external necessity, such a secret to her lover, and still more unnatural that she should insist on revealing it to her lover's mother. But our experience of humanity has convinced us that there is nothing unnatural to human nature; it is capable at once of the highest, the lowest, the meanest, the noblest, the most common and the most uncommon of actions. And we think that a powerful, somewhat morbid, enthusiastic, guilty, glorious, strange woman like Julia Witherson, placed in her very peculiar circumstance, would act as we have described.

CHAPTER VIII.

OF SORROW IS BORN RESOLVE.

Four hours have elapsed since the parting recorded in our last chapter.

It is moonlight. From the clear blue sky of a mild December night the moon is pouring plenteously forth her streams of glory. The air is, as winter airs go, balmy ; and lovers promenade, and seem to forget that it is not summer. It is, to be brief, one of the most delightful of conceivable nights in winter.

To-night, Miss Kate Somers is seated in her luxurious room, close to a fire, reading a French novel, planning new flirtations for the coming week, devising fresh triumphs of coquetry and heartlessness, and cursing the intimacy of her friend Julia with that "great catch," Charles ; an intimacy which she dreams not no longer exists. Meanwhile, the moral and honorable Henry Hericot is engaged in captivating some new victim; using his face and accomplishments for the devil's purposes.

Meanwhile, Mr. Russell, Julia's guardian, has returned several hours sooner than was expected ; and not finding Mr. Singerly with his ward, as usual, expressed some surprise. And then Julia informed him in a few words that "the engagement" between Charles and herself was at an end ; and quietly but decisively refused to give any information, requesting that nothing further should ever be mentioned on the subject.

Meanwhile, Mrs. Singerly has retired to her room ; her heart full of sorrow and her soul full of wonder at the disclosure of the last few hours. All the bright dreams which but this very afternoon she had cherished for her son are

now dispelled. Mingled admiration and disgust for Julia, and mingled love and pity for Charles possess her spirit, but her resolution is unchanged.

Charles has also retired to his "study," and, locking fast the door, to prevent all intrusion, even from his mother, has abandoned himself to his despair. It is rarely that men weep, very rarely do tears fill the eyes of those who are, by the birthright of their sex, "the lords of creation;" but if you will look at Charles now, you will find that, though his face is hidden in his hands, large tear-drops are trickling through his fingers, and that his whole frame is convulsed with emotion. Gods! it is a fearful sight thus to witness strong men in their agony! more fearful still when the contrast of the woe within is so great when compared with the luxury and comfort all around the sufferer; and with the beauty of the pale, sweet, soft, tender moonlight, that steals through the window, and falls full upon the form of the weeping wretch, who sees it not, and recks not of it.

And Julia is seated at her piano, playing plaintive melodies in quick succession, each melody more melancholy than the one which preceded it. She, too, has wept; but not long; she cannot afford to weep; there is too much sorrow in her future for her to indulge in the luxury of tears. She has endeavored to fix her mind upon her favorite, strange, metaphysical studies; she has striven in the depths of mental mysteries to forget for a while her plain, tangible agonies; but in vain. And now she sits at her piano, throwing her whole soul into her fingers, and making the instrument speak for her to the ears of Heaven. Never did Lizt, Thalberg, Chopin, Gottschalk, De Meyer, perform as did, at this hour, Julia Witherson. Each chord sounds like the wail of a breaking heart; like the voice of her own soul, which tells her "Henceforth there remains for thee no love, no joy, only sorrow and expiation."

Then she goes to the chandelier, lowers the gas-light, and opens wide the shutters. And then rushes in a tide of

Heaven's most delicious moonlight, flooding, as it were, her whole countenance with radiance. To her excited fancy it seems as though this beautiful light was a messenger of good tidings. As though Heaven smiled upon her, even in the depths of sorrow. A mental reaction ensued from the despairing state into which she had been driven; hope and resolution take possession of her soul. And there and then, on that December night, with the moonlight shining full upon her intellectual face and queenly form, her eyes dilating with the noble resolution which pervades her soul, she vows so to atone for her early error, so to redeem her fall by exalted acts of virtue, that even the orthodox Mrs. Singerly, tho stern mother of the man she loves, shall at last confess that she, Julia Witherson, is worthy to be her son's wife and her daughter. She vows so to expiate her error that at last even the prejudiced women of society shall confess in their own despite, that a woman may fall, and yet rise again; may be "erring, yet noble." Did she keep her vow? We will see.

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BOOK THE SECOND.

ONWARD AND UPWARD.

CHAPTER I.

ONE STEP.

In the earlier part of the month of March, towards five o'clock in the afternoon, Julia Witherson was seated in her own apartment, alone, and in deep meditation.

Her room was not large but most comfortable, furnished with every attention both to the useful and the beautiful, the *utile et dulce*. Every convenience for a lady's toilet was at hand; all that modern civilization can do for a woman in the way of dressing cases, well-filled wardrobes, and the like, waited upon her convenience. One side of the room was covered with shelves loaded with books, volumes of reference, literary works and volumes of philosophy, betokening the intellectual tastes of the occupant. A cozy fire was burning in the grate, for the day had been raw, cold and blustering. And in an easy arm-chair sat Julia, little changed since we saw her last, saving that she is much paler, somewhat thinner, and more intellectual, though, alas! sadder looking. Her eyes, too, seem larger than their wont, and as though not unused to tears—young as she is her forehead has a line of care, and her dress is, at the present moment, neglected and careless.

As she sat by the fire, with the dreary March evening closing around her, and heard the wind howling without, she sighed heavily, and then her musings found utterance. "Yes, though at first my pride rebelled, yet I have learned to acknowledge

that she, *his* mother, was right when she refused her consent to my marriage with her son. I have been taught humility ; but yet the time shall come when she shall not withhold her consent, when I shall have so atoned that even she will confess herself satisfied. Oh ! for some plan by which I can work out this expiation—this atonement. But no matter, I will attain unto this idea some day. And Charles—Charles—my Charles, how I love him still ! He little guesses how, unseen myself, I ever watch his movements. I have striven to forget him in vain ; I have given my days and nights to study—to music ; yet his image haunts me still. I have heard of his dissipations, and of his brief but violent flirtations, and I understand but too well the cause both of the one and the other. He loves me still, cannot forget me. Yes, he loves me truly—will love me forever—and I shall yet be fully worthy of his fullest love. It is hard thus to be punished ; it is hard thus to be severed from a true passion just at the moment of fruition and repentance ; but it is best to bear a heavy burden ; all other loads will seem light in comparison. Oh God, for there must be a God somewhere, let me first be tried and purified by affliction, and then, oh then, let me know the full bliss of affection !"

And in the excitement of the moment she raised her eyes upward, and outstretched her hands, as though striving to grasp palpably the mercy of heaven. But her violent emotion was of transitory duration ; she grew calmer, and advanced to the book-shelves, to seek a momentary solace in reading. First she took down a copy of Byron, but his works were too morbid to give her relief. Then she sought refuge in Rosseau ; then rushed to some German savant with an unpronounceable name, and at last stumbled upon a copy of an old book, very much ridiculed in certain quarters, but a great book notwithstanding. The most used, the most abused, the most wonderful, the most fearful, the most delicious, the most incomprehensible, and yet the most simple of volumes, The Holy Bible. This was a book into which Julia had of late looked more than formerly ; she had even begun to read it regularly, as a matter of curiosity and

study. She was not yet a "believer" in its doctrines; her only religion was the religion of "Nature," and of an honorable heart (a very good creed, but not sufficient); but she had now commenced to doubt her own doubts. She opened the volume, and glanced over it. She read a chapter in Genesis, some of the odd chapters in Leviticus and Deuteronomy, some of the histories of the Kings, etc., without finding special matter for thought; but, turning over the pages of the New Testament, she chanced to fall upon the instructive, heart-touching story of the woman taken in adultery and brought unto the Saviour, and forgiven by him. Then, as she turned over the leaves, her eye caught that short, but most sweet and magnificent sentence, the finest, to our taste, in either ancient or modern literature,—"God is love." She put the Bible away; and the thought rushed over her mind—not for the first time—that a book so full of forgiveness and affection, must be also full of truth and inspiration. And, as she sat in her lonely room, with no companionship save that of her own soul, a voice seemed to say to her, as was said to Thomas in the olden time,—"Be not doubting, but—believing."

A tap was heard at her room door; and a servant entering, informed our heroine that the Rev. George Howard had called, and was awaiting her appearance in the parlor.

In the meantime, while our heroine is dressing to receive her visitor, we will precede her to the parlor, and speak a few words concerning her clerical guest, whom we introduced to the reader in our last book, at the burning of the church of St. ———.

He was a college-mate, and is a true, warm friend of Charles Singerly's, and though he has been acquainted with Miss Witherson for not many months, has, nevertheless, become warmly interested in her welfare in a friendly way, and has won a large portion of her esteem.

The Rev. George Howard is a tall, fine-looking, intellectual young man, of powerful physique, with dark hair, shading a broad brow, deep, black eyes, dark complexion, a handsome moustache, and splendid teeth, and without the inevitable white

cravat, which is supposed to be essential. In fact, Mr. Howard's appearance was far from clerical. He looked like a thoroughly *au fait* man of the world. He did not believe that the tailor made either the man or the clergyman. And as he had a tendency in his nature to fine clothes, he indulged his taste. He was a dandy, in short. Both in his outer and his *inner* man he differed greatly from the majority of priests. His parents being of high respectability and great wealth, Howard had been allowed every advantage, and had improved his opportunities. But his soul was of a higher and purer order than the average. From his earliest years he had been both "moral and religious;" not a canting, prejudiced charlatan, but a wise, gentlemanly, observing, sensible, practical, unpretending, large-hearted Christian; holy, but enlightened; sinless, yet the friend of sinners. He had seen that "religion," so-called now-a-days, is a narrow, formal, *un*practical and *im*practicable thing; and had resolved to devote his life to an earnest endeavor to make religion something different and something better. He, therefore, in pursuance of his plan, first studied and observed the world of books and of men. He read law, medicine, divinity; had been engaged awhile in business, in politics, in editorship, and in authorship; had traveled extensively, and had moved in all circles of society. He accomplished this part of his programme between the age of eighteen and that of twenty-eight, and then devoted himself to the study of an *eclectic* religion, embracing the strong points of the various creeds, but omitting their errors. He then became an independent preacher; teaching a religion fitted for the world and its uses; encouraging moderate and lawful pleasure, ambition, shrewdness, etc., etc.; but, at the same time, a religion of peace, opposed to sectarianism or to war; a religion in short of *good works*, rather than good *words or forms;* of the *heart*, rather than *habit;* of honesty, practical profit, and universal charity and brotherhood.

Of course, many laughed at him; many misunderstood him; some reviled him (especially the clergymen of the various sects); and all wondered at him. But he cared not; and in course of

time the masses of the community began to understand him and to like him—he became popular.

One thing he never did. He never read theological works. Theology he considered, and rightly, as the foe of piety. His only religious book was his Bible, the plain simple Bible, without note or comment. One thing he always did: one-third of all he had, both of time and money, he gave freely and heartily to the poor. His was, indeed, true religion and true piety.

Such was the Rev. George Howard, who was now awaiting the advent of Julia Witherson.

Presently our heroine appeared, welcomed her friend warmly, and became engaged with him in conversation.

One of the objects of Mr. Howard's present visit was to ascertain if possible the cause of the separation between Julia and his intimate friend, Charles—a separation which he had wondered at, regretted, but was totally in the dark as to any reason for it. But on broaching the subject delicately he found Miss Witherson quite as uncommunicative as Charles, and, therefore, abandoned his idea for the present.

Dinner was now announced, and Miss Witherson was escorted to the table by her visitor. After dinner, Mr. Howard and our heroine found themselves in sole and undisputed possession of the parlor; Mrs. Russell was out of town; her husband had a business engagement; and Julia received no general company. So the conversation between our parties had no check upon it, and soon became serious, touching upon the topic of religion, a subject which Mr. Howard was ever glad to discuss, though averse to obtruding it.

"Tell me, Mr. Howard, tell me what is *true* religion," asked our heroine. "Give me your idea of the religion of a good man."

"It is very simple, Miss Julia," replied the Rev. Howard. "It is *not* a system of forms or institutions. It is *not* a definite creed, a belief in certain dogmas. It is *not* the mere avoidance of certain vices; nor yet the mere practice of any individual virtue. No; true religion is none of these. Forms and creeds are to true piety what dress is to the man; useful, very elegant,

but by no means the man himself. No ; real religion is an hon est, practical belief in a good and just God ; in the weakness of man's nature, and his need of a Redeemer ; in a place of reward for the virtuous, and a place of punishment for the evil-doers ; in a "next world" which will "set right" the present. And more than this, true religion consists in honesty, industry, prudence ; laudable ambition ; a sense of honor ; moderation ; true friendship ; true love ; freedom from prejudice ; large-heartedness ; and, above all, personal honor ; nobility of soul ; true sympathy and philanthropy. Such, Miss Julia, is my idea of 'the religion of a good man.'"

As Julia sat and listened to such an exposition of religion, her soul expanded, and she felt that, were all creeds like his, she had never been an infidel. But then she remembered several harsh and mysterious texts she had encountered in her casual readings of the Bible, and the still more harsh and unnatural interpretations that celebrated so-called "commentators" and "divines" had fastened upon them. She found it difficult to reconcile such teachings as these with the noble doctrines enunciated by the Reverend Howard. She mentioned this fact to him, but our clergyman readily disposed of these objections, showing that we cannot, being fallible, undertake to understand all portions of the infallible Scriptures ; that the Bible must be believed "in the lump," as it were, rather than piece-meal, the harsh and mysterious parts being forgotten in the sufficiency, for all practical purposes, of the tender and plain passages ; and, lastly, that "commentators," as a class, were full of mistakes, and had done more harm than good in the religious world.

"But what," asked Julia,—and we can imagine how anxiously—"are our views as regards sin and sinners ? Are there any *unpardonable* sins ? Can one who has erred, even to the very extent of error,—whether man or woman—can he or *she*, in this world, *atone* for their fault, and become once more pure and spotless ?"

"Miss Witherson," answered the Reverend George Howard, slowly, solemnly and earnestly to this interrogatory, "as surely as

I believe there is a God, so surely do I believe that no sin whatever is unpardonable ; no crime but what can be repented of sincerely and truthfully, and be fully and forever forgiven. Nay, more—no sin, however great, *whether it be in man or in woman*, whether the world pardon it or not, whether society has mercy upon it or no, but can be in this world atoned for ; not by fastings or prayers, or forms or creeds, but by the exercise of many *extraordinary virtues in the place of the one extraordinary error ?"*

Such were the noble sentiments of the Rev. George Howard ; sentiments infinitely above the average. Need we say what comfort they brought to the soul of Julia.

Reader, is it any wonder, if in the course of time, Julia ceased to be a "skeptic," and became a believer in Christianity as thus interpreted ? Her natural independence ; her pride of mental power ; her careless, Godless continental education ; and, more than all, her observation of the hypocrisies and inconsistencies of Christians—these led her originally to skepticism ; but time, experience, self-knowledge, the humility taught her by her shame, further study, all these, and more than all these—the beauty, the glory, the peace of true Christianity, as interpreted by true Christians of the George Howard school, brought her at last, with the blessing of Heaven, to Faith and Holy Hope.

Is not this, indeed, "a step onward and upward ?"

CHAPTER II.

ANOTHER STEP—A GRAND RESOLVE.

We have before stated that Julia had, in her own secret heart, made a vow so to ATONE for her early error, that even the mother of her lover should confess herself satisfied. How this atonement was to be carried out she as yet knew not. The idea had not suggested itself to her, as to the manner, the details of the expiation; but her soul brooded constantly and anxiously on the subject, ready to act upon the first grand, practical suggestion that should occur.

One evening, when her meditations upon this theme were of more than usual earnestness, her uncle came to her, as she was sitting solitary in her chamber, and begged her to accompany his wife and self to pay a call upon a friend not many blocks distant. She accepted the invitation, glad of any distraction to her thoughts. It was about eight o'clock, and our trio took Broadway for a short distance on the way to their destination. This great thoroughfare was crowded—as noisy and as gay as ever—and Julia wondered as she saw the passing and re-passing multitude of men, how they all managed to "earn a living." But, alas, she also encountered many women, whose sunken yet painted cheeks, and whose bold, reckless wretchedness of demeanor, left no doubt as to the question of *their* means of obtaining a livelihood. True, Julia, in common with all women who live in this good town of New York, had often been compelled to behold women of this class many times before this; but to-night the sight of these wretches produced a more than wonted effect upon her mind. Her soul sunk with shame at this degradation of her sex.

And suddenly the thought flashed through her mind: cannot some, at least, of these poor wretches be redeemed?

cannot I do something towards redeeming them ? This idea rushed upon and seized her mentally, as if by inspiration. She accompanied her relatives, paid her call with them, performed mechanically all that was required, said mechanically all that was needed, returned home and retired. But she moved, and talked, and felt like one in a trance ; her *self*, her *soul* was possessed with the idea—cannot I do something towards the salvation of the outcasts of my own sex !

The idea was a wild one, a very original and wild thought, Utopian perhaps, indelicate perhaps ; but civilization often drives just such ideas as these into the heads of thinking people.

True, "respectable" women are supposed by the world to be utterly ignorant even of the existence of women who are not respectable; true, women of one class know little and care less (save occasionally in a vague, mysterious way of which they never dare to speak) of women of another class ; true, even Julia herself had, until this very night, heeded little of these lepers of society, and bestowed upon them only an occasional shudder ; but now a new interest in these poor creatures awoke in her mind and heart ; and as time rolled on her interest in this subject deepened. One morning, on taking up the newspaper of the day, her eye fell upon a detailed account of the meeting of a Rosine association, on which occasion a report had been read giving full particulars of the amount of good achieved by the society during the past year, and stating it as the opinion of the committee that if more women of the respectable class would but devote themselves to the work of bringing back the unfortunate, an infinitely greater amount of good could be accomplished. The report concluded as follows : "Kindness and sympathy will be found effectual with the most degraded when harshness and mere moral teachings have failed. Love and pity, as shown in the gentle voice and the warm grasp of the hand will do more to redeem than all 'the terrors of the law enunciated in all the thunders of Mount Sinai."

These words, so full of truth that they deserve to be inscribed indelibly upon the heart of every woman who cares for the true interests of her sex, produced a deep impression upon our heroine; their memory remained not only in her mind but in her soul. They were never forgotten.

One Sunday afternoon, a delicious May Sunday, one of the sweet half-spring, half-summer days, which Heaven sometimes sends to bless the earth with, when even the crowded city seems to become transfigured, as it were, into something more lovely than a mere mass of heated bricks and mortar; when in the country the birds sing sweetly in the balmy air, and in the town people meet each other with a smile, and the children cry out in their glee "Summer's coming;" one May. Sunday afternoon, as Julia sat in her room, by the open window, half dreaming and half thinking, her aunt entered the apartment and said, "Julie, for a wonder I think I will attend service somewhere this afternoon. A walk will do me good. Will you go with me?"

"With pleasure, aunt," replied our heroine.

"Now, where shall we go? I propose St. S——'s."

"Oh, that is too near. Why, it is not five minutes' distance."

"St. P——'s then."

"That is too far. We would not reach there till late," observed Julia.

"Where, then, shall we go?" said Mrs. Russell. "Oh, I have it, Julia. Let us go to hear your friend Mr. Howard."

"Just the thing, aunt. I could have wished for nothing better."

In due time they reached the church of which Mr. Howard was at present pastor, and found a large congregation assembled; for Howard had become of late quite popular as a bold, independent speaker, who "told his mind" on all subjects, and was not afraid of the truth in any of its thousands of shapes, or its tens of thousands of applications

After the usual services, the clergyman announced as his text, "Let him that is without sin cast the first stone at her." Julia started. It was strange how this text chimed with her recent meditations. Howard proceeded to give a bold, plain-spoken, truth-telling sermon on the immorality of the age. "Immorality," said the orator (for he was an orator, and his eloquence was truth), "is the vice of the times. It pervades all classes of society, the rich and the poor, the married and the unmarried. It is the darling sin of the man of the world, and is not unknown to vehemently protesting and ardently professing Christians. Chastity is as rare as honesty; licentiousness is as universal as extravagance.

"And yet," the orator continued, "corrupt as society is, nothing will satisfy it but it must be hypocritical in addition. The very men who betray are the first to desert. And the stained women of fashion are the very ones to loathe their poor wayward sisters of the streets.

> Yes, every woe a tear may claim,
> Except an erring sister's shame."

The clergyman concluded his discourse as follows: "There is a large class of unfortunate women who can be redeemed. Yes, spite of the cant of the day, I tell you the great majority of this class *can* be redeemed. Not by scorning them, as most of you do; not by threatening them either with the law or the gospel, as some mistaken zealots do; but by simply seeking them out in the spirit of love and of the Lord Jesus Christ, and by a sister's heart within your own breast, finding out the way to theirs. My word for it, one good woman with truth on her lips and love in her heart can win ten bad women back to the paths of virtue.

"Oh that some one woman would but try the experiment—would but act upon our suggestion—she would be, indeed, the benefactress of her sex. All women would call her 'blessed.' She would deserve a monument; aye, she would *have* one; a monument of praise and heartfelt thanksgiving. What-

ever her own individual faults might be, the glory of this her goodness would overshadow them all. For of her it could truly be said, 'Her sins (even though they be many) are forgiven her, for she loved much!'"

The sermon was over; the congregation was dismissed; the lovely May afternoon was drawing to its close. And Julia Witherson had at last found her atonement. She had at last found how to atone for evil by doing good.

She felt as though the last words of the sermon she had just heard were directly intended by heaven and the speaker for her and her only. Yes! she would atone for herself by the redemption of others. This may seem a wild idea, a Utopian scheme, an extravagant thought. But strange and noble people when they hear strange but glorious sentiments, such as those spoken by the Rev. Howard, will adopt these sentiments, and construct upon them strange but noble courses of action. And thus with Julia such an idea as she now conceived, could never by any possibility have entered into the mind of most women. Yet it was to her perfectly natural, under the circumstances. Nothing noble is unnatural to a noble mind, under noble excitement.

Her mind was made up. She returned home with her heart and soul full of the idea. And that night, just as midnight swept over the city, with its wings laden with women's sighs and with women's sins, with wicked revels and with evil deeds, while

> "The cold, round moon shone deeply down.
> * * * * blue the sky
> Spread like an ocean hung on high,
> Bespangled with those isles of light,
> So wildly, spiritually bright."

At this solemn hour stood Julia at the window of her chamber, gazing into the blue infinitude of space, studded with its stars, and seeking mentally, as it were, to pierce the veil that hid from her sight Him, the all-good and the all-merciful, Him who heareth and recordeth vows. For in the depths of her

heart a vow was now being uttered ; a vow as solemn as was ever made on earth, or registered in heaven—a vow that concerned perchance the everlasting welfare of many another woman. For our heroine determined henceforth to devote herself to the rescue of the unfortunate, the redemption of the depraved of her own sex. She fell upon her knees and prayed for strength—for blessing. The blessing that she asked was that by this means she should be enabled to atone for her own fatal error ; to win at least the approval of *her* upon whose consent depended the happy love of *him*, the man who was her earthly all.

And the moon shone on, and the stars twinkled, and neither earth nor heaven gave a sign—but who can doubt but that she was heard—aye, and answered, too ? For when she arose from her knees, there was a smile upon her lips, and in her heart that "peace of God which passeth understanding."

CHAPTER III.

A WOMAN SAVED.

Good resolves are comparatively easy; but it is a difficult matter to leave glowing generalities, and to descend to necessary but very disagreeable details.

The resolve of Julia, spoken of in our last, was most noble. But soon the question arose—"How can I best realize my idea?" This question was more readily asked than answered.

Remember her position. A young, unmarried woman, with a large and fashionable acquaintance; how could she mix, as mix she must, with the lowest class of females without being noticed and severely criticised? It was a matter in which she could scarcely have confidants, either male or female. She could join no organized associations—they did not fully answer her designs. And, consequently, she found that her good work would have to be done in secret, by her own unaided, individual exertions. She had, of course, but little information as to any data regarding the subject on which to base her plans; the condition of the heathen being a matter on which most "respectable women" are as well informed as they are concerning the details and habits of women who are *not* "respectable." But knowledge on this subject must be procured, and procured through her own efforts alone.

One afternoon in June, Miss Witherson proceeded down Broadway to make some purchases for herself, her aunt, and even her aunt's servants; for our heroine, full of true, had no false pride, and was always kind to and thoughtful of her inferiors. Though plain and tasteful, yet Julia's attire was costly, even extravagant (for our heroine was lavish in her attire, as in her expenditure), and attracted much notice from the gentlemen,

while it excited no little envy in the bosoms of the lady pedestrians. Having made her purchases (by-the-by, she was not an "expert" at "shopping;" she was but a poor hand at bargaining, and always paid "two prices" for everything she bought), our heroine strolled along our great thoroughfare for some distance, enjoying the beauty of the afternoon, which was balmy and delightful. Feeling at last somewhat wearied, she entered one of our fashionable saloons (more for rest than refreshment) and gave a trifling order. While waiting, a gentleman, who had been seated at a table close by, arose, and Julia recognized him as a Mr. Theodore Watson, with whom she was slightly acquainted. As Julia returned the salute of this gentleman, she noticed that, as he pulled out his handkerchief, a letter fell from his pocket to the floor. She called to him to direct his attention to the fact; but he had already neared the door of the saloon. "I will keep it for him till I see him again; it may be of importance." So thinking, Julia advanced and picked up the letter. It had no envelope, and she could not help recognizing the handwriting; it was familiar to her—alas, too familiar; it was that of Henry Hericot. She gave a start as she recognized it, and once more glancing at the note mechanically, her eye fell upon these words,—"There Mary and I will have a supper, wines, etc. I shall use all my accomplishments; force, if necessary." She started again, and more violently. These words had, to her mind, knowing the writer as she did, a fearful significance. They referred, her instinct told her, to some new crime about to be perpetrated by Hericot. Would that she could but read the letter and learn further particulars; perhaps she might then be able to prevent it. Why should she not read the letter? True, it was designed for another; but the safety of the victim, the Mary referred to, should not be sacrificed to a scruple. Providence had so ordered it that the means for detecting villainy were placed now in her hands. Should she not use them? Should she not read? After a brief but severe mental struggle, she determined "yes," and read as follows:

"Dear Theodore—I will not be able to join you on the night of which you speak. I have just made an appointment for that evening with a most delicious creature—a shop girl uptown, who is called Mary Barton, the most unsophisticated of mortals. She thinks my name to be Charles Crosby (my 'traveling name,' you know,) and that I am 'serious.' Her parents are dead. She is boarding, and I am her first acquaintance. I am a happy dog, am I not? My plan is to take her, at eight o'clock, Wednesday evening, to a convenient friend of mine, who lives in —— St., No. —. There Mary and I will have a supper, wines, etc. I shall use all my accomplishments—and force, if necessary,—so that Wednesday night will be somewhat of an epoch. But on Thursday, I will meet you at the Club, if I do not happen to encounter you previously. Yours, etc.,

Henry Hericot."

On reading this letter, the first thought that presented itself to our heroine's mind was, that here lay the commencement of her career as a redeemer of her sex; here was her first opportunity to save a woman; here was a woman, Mary Barton, to be saved; and Julia's soul was at once determined to avail itself of the opportunity. Mary Barton, then, should be rescued. But how? It was now five o'clock in the afternoon of the very Wednesday mentioned in the villainous letter—within three hours of the time appointed. She knew not Mary Barton; the letter specified not her abode; it only mentioned the place of meeting. To this place then, at eight o'clock that very evening, she must go—and go alone; for both her uncle and the Rev. Mr. Howard, the only two persons to whom she could apply, were, she knew, both out of town. A momentary thought of the police entered her mind; but no, she would go herself, and go alone. A certain amount of natural fear and prudence struggled within her; but her pride—her self-confidence—a certain love of adventure (which had always been a feature in her character); her courage (beyond the average of her sex); her faith in her cause and intentions, and in the protection of Heav-

en ; a desire to foil the man who had once foiled and betrayed her ; these overcame her scruples, and determined her in her course.

She instantly went to her guardian's residence ; left word there that she would not be at home till late, intending to visit a mutual friend of the family a few doors distant. She then called upon this friend and remained till seven o'clock. Then controlling her agitation as best she might, and refusing an escort, "as the distance home," she said, "was so trifling," she hastily wended her way, agitated but not daunted, avoiding the leading streets, and hiding her features as much as possible, to the house of the "convenient friend" mentioned in the letter of Hericot, which letter, by the by, she carried with her. On reaching the house in St——, No—, having hastily determined upon her plan of action, she advanced and rang the bell. In a few moments an old woman answered the summons, peering around cautiously, and asking, "Who is there ?"

"My name is Mary Barton," was the reply. "Mr. Crosby told me to call here. He was not able to come with me, but will be here shortly. He told me I was to wait here till he came."

Our heroine had given Hericot's assumed name to the woman, on a venture—it proved to be a successful one. For though the old woman seemed somewhat surprised at the change of programme, (for she expected that Hericot and Mary Barton would arrive together,) and had expected to find a more timid, unsophisticated girl than the one before her ; yet our heroine's assurance succeeded, as assurance generally does. She was admitted and shown into a plainly furnished parlor, and was then left alone. In the course of some twenty minutes, (which seemed like so many hours to our heroine, who, bold as she was, felt the peculiarity of her position, and was several times upon the very point of retiring from her undertaking), another ring was heard at the door. The old woman again answered this summons, but was astonished at beholding Mr. Hericot in company with a second woman, who was, of course,

this time, the genuine Mary Barton. The new comers were admitted, however ; then Hericot, being told of the presence of a third party, who had assumed the name of his companion, rushed into the parlor, and beheld the person whom of all living beings upon the face of the earth, he now least expected or desired to see, his former victim, his present conqueror, Julia Witherson.

It would require a skilful painter of human emotions to do full justice to the *position* now presented. The fear and wonder of the woman of the house ; the astonishment of Mary Barton (a pretty, delicate-looking, curly-haired, slender girl of the blonde order); the mingled sensations of Henry Hericot, as expressed by his eye and his changes of countenance, wonder, fear, rage and utter vexation at the unlooked-for presence ; and lastly, the contempt, triumph, and joy depicted upon Julia's glorious face, all these to be described must have been seen. The room had naught remarkable about it ; the furniture was plain, the pictures were few ; and yet, no gorgeous scene upon *any* stage ever presented a more truly dramatic tableau.

Julia was the first to speak. Turning to Hericot, she said :

"I know all. Your intended treachery to this poor girl is revealed to me." Then, seeing his start of astonishment, she continued : "The explanation is very simple—this letter of yours. Your correspondents should be more careful of such valuable documents (showing the letter). I have come here to prevent your design—and I *will* prevent it."

Then turning to the astonished Mary Barton, she read the letter to her, spite of an effort of Hericot's to wrest it from her.

"My poor, innocent girl, you see to what a danger and to what a villain you have unwittingly exposed yourself. This man here, who boasts that you regard him as your suitor, takes advantage of your innocence, your ignorance of the world, your lonely, motherless condition, of all that should render you sacred ; takes advantage of all these things, for the basest of purposes. He would make you as vile and as wretched as he

has made many another woman, and would then leave you without remorse. And, brave knight and valiant gentleman that he is"—here the speaker's voice assumed a bitter, sarcastic tone, totally indescribable—"this *man* is prepared to use force, if lying fails. But, thank God, I am here as your preserver."

"A fine preserver of others *you* are truly," cried Hericot, in desperation, "you who have lost——"

But he proceeded no further in his retort. He saw a flush pass over Julia's face; he saw her eyes dilate and sparkle with a dangerous fire; he saw her magnificent form grandly expand, as it were, with indignation; he saw her hands clinch; and a coward's fear came over his coward's heart and stilled his coward's lips before the last damning words of his retort, the full meaning of which was never known to the other parties, were spoken.

He contented himself, therefore, with approaching Julia, and hissingly whispered in her ear:

"Have a care, have a care; you are in my power. Let the secret I hold concerning *you* be revealed, and your condition would be worse than that of the woman whom you would 'save,' as you style it. Take heed, lest I turn tattler, as you have turned intermeddler."

"You dare not turn 'tattler.' You have the meanness to do so, but not the courage. You would thereby lose the purse of your friend Charles Singerly. Ah–ha! I, too, have *you* in my power. Betray my secret if you dare, and reconcile yourself, if you can, to loss of friend and money, which to you is more than either life or honor."

Such was Julia's expressive and sufficient reply to the empty threat of Hericot.

Then turning to Mary Barton, our heroine addressed her:

"Miss Barton, *Mary*, let me call you, for my heart warms towards you—you see this letter which I hand you; you see that man's tell-tale face; you mark yonder vile woman; you behold my face, which must speak its truth and its kindness; can you doubt of the snare that has been laid to entrap you?"

Mary looked around her. She had recognized the hand-

writing of the letter, she read it eagerly yet loathingly; she saw the confusion of her false lover; she marked with disgust the countenance of the old woman; she could not doubt the perfect truth and love which looked from Julia's eyes; she fell upon our heroine's neck, and burst into tears, as she exclaimed: "I am saved, and you have saved me."

It was a touching sight. The proud, stately brunette, Julia, with her large eyes and long dark rich hair, embraced, clung to by the timid, curly-haired, fair-skinned Mary Barton—sisters in the holy bond of preserver and preserved, which now united them, though until this hour utter strangers to each other!

"Come with me, Mary," said Julia, tenderly, "come with me; your beauty shall find a companion, and your innocence a protector."

"Oh yes, let us go," was the reply, "let us leave this horrible place—these fearful people who can plan such frightful plots against a poor girl. And yet, I *did* think that *that* man loved me." And a tear forced itself into Mary's blue eye as she sighed over her vanished dream of love.

"I thought so, too, once," muttered Julia, bitterly, to herself, and then raising her head proudly she said to Hericot, "We leave you to your conscience." Then turning to the old woman she simply, sternly said, "Open your door that we may pass out."

Hericot would have murdered Julia on the spot had he dared. Thoughts of resisting their departure rushed through his mind, but he knew our heroine's courage, her resources, her will; he felt that he was acting a villainous, and, therefore, a weak part; he knew not what aid might be at hand; and he was personally a coward.

With curses on his lips, and still more fearful curses unuttered in his soul, he beckoned to his comrade in iniquity, who opened the street door, and the two young girls departed from the house.

* * * *

Moonlight, a lovely, fine moonlight was flooding the streets as our two girls wended their way, at every step leaving further behind them the scene of their recent danger and victory. Passing through the minor streets, and avoiding the crowded thoroughfares, and hiding their countenances as much as possible, they reached at last, without any adventure or recognition, the "up town" boarding house wherein Mary Barton resided. For Julia had determined that it was best that her newly-found friend should return for the night to her accustomed quarters, where our heroine would call upon her in the morning, with her plans for the future more fully arranged. Julia's kindness embraced not only the saving of Mary Barton from *one* peril merely, but from all exposure to future dangers. At the door of the boarding house the two girls, so strangely met, parted from each other; Mary Barton, who, every moment, felt more vividly the horrors from which she had been rescued, putting her arm affectionately, gratefully, yet most respectfully around our heroine's neck, and kissing her fervently. In that kiss there was more gratitude expressed than those same beautiful lips could have ever spoken. And in that kiss Julia enjoyed her exceeding great reward.

* * * *

It is midnight, and in his club-room Hericot is regaling his companions with an account of his numerous triumphs over women. He speaks with the air of a great conqueror, a second Cæsar. Has he forgotten his disgraceful discomfiture not three hours ago? Not by any means. And he has determined upon revenge? But he is a capital actor, and a capital liar.

It is midnight, and while Hericot sits in his club-room lying, Julia sits by her bedroom window thinking. The same moon which in May shone on her as she made her vow, now shines on her in June when she has taken her first step in its fulfillment. She kneels down in the moonlight and thanks God. Her agitation has subsided; the reaction which super

vened upon the excitement she has undergone has passed away, everything is forgotten save that Heaven has blessed her efforts, that she has taken one step further in atonement, in expiation; that she has become more worthy of Heaven's forgiveness, of Charles' love, and of his mother's smiles. But Julia is not selfish; and, above all other things, does she thank God upon her knees, at her bedroom window, with her large eyes and glorious face upturned to the Infinite One, whose throne is beyond the stars, that through his blessing upon her efforts a soul has been preserved—a woman has been saved!

CHAPTER IV.

AN ASSISTANT IS PROCURED.

The next day Julia called upon Mary Barton, and suggested that she should abandon her situation in the store, and live with our heroine as her "companion." Mary gladly consented; and as Julia's guardian and his wife, to whom she had mentioned in a general way that she needed "a companion," were willing to gratify their ward, the matter was arranged.

Julia, though her heart had been taught suspicion by experience, nevertheless soon learned not only to like but to love Mary Barton; she was so grateful, so loving, yet so full of true respect. She never was weary of thanking our heroine for the service she had rendered her—a service which she appreciated at its true value. For thoughtless, ignorant of the world, unsophisticated as she had once been, she was *so* no longer. But no woman that ever lived prized more highly the boon, the priceless boon of honor.

One day Mary was more than usually eloquent upon her theme. "Oh, Miss Julia," she said, "how I shudder often at nights when I think from what a horrible fate you rescued me. Many a poor girl in this city (for I have learned lately that there are such women) would not have lived the way she lives now, had a bold, true, angel-friend like you been near her in her hour of trial. Oh, Miss Julia, do you know I think that but for *you* I might have been *forced* to be just such a girl as one of these poor creatures!! Perhaps you think it strange and wrong in me, Miss Julia, to think on such matters, but I *have* asked myself (I am a silly thing I know), cannot something be done by good women, women like you, for these poor, lost, bad women? I do *pity* them so. Perhaps I ought to *hate* them, but I cannot, I only pity them."

Julia was now seized with a sudden impulse, to explain which we must digress a moment.

In her plan for the redemption of her sex, that plan which was day and night nearest to her soul and to her heart, Julia felt that she needed a female confidant—a female assistant. Yet in such a scheme it seemed to her impossible, as before remarked, to procure one. When she was thrown into contact with Mary Barton, the idea had occasionally flitted through Julia's brain that possibly her new "companion" might answer her purposes. But Mary's seeming worldly ignorance and weakness of mind thwarted her purpose. But Julia had of late discovered that her companion was neither so weak-minded nor so worldly-ignorant as she had at first imagined ; and now to-day she also discovered that her new friend had thought upon the very subject that most occupied her own mind. So, actuated by a sudden impulse, she replied to the words of her companion, just recorded.

"You are right, Mary. We women ought to pity and not to hate the unfortunates of our own sex. And we two, yes, even we two, can do much to save them. I have something to tell you of, Mary ; something in which you can aid me greatly. Shall I tell you ? Will you aid me ?"

"Oh, Miss Julia," replied Mary, "why ask me such questions ? Of course, I will do all that you can ask of me."

"Then I will tell you a secret, Mary. I will tell you of a very strange resolve I made recently. A good man, the Rev. George Howard, of whom you have heard me speak, once said in a sermon, which I heard, that a woman could, by kindness and love and personal exertion, restore the unfortunates of her sex. These words haunted me, and, at last, I determined to act upon his suggestion. Mary, I have determined, strange and even foolish as it may seem, to devote my time and energies to the restoration of poor women, like those of whom you just spoke. Something tells me that you will aid in this scheme ; you will help me in this work of salvation, will you not ? Your words, just uttered, make me think that you *will*. Am I not right ?"

"Miss Julia, it is a noble plan—a plan worthy of a woman like you" (the speaker little dreamt who and what Julia really

was). "If a poor girl like me can be of any use to you, do with me as you will. But how will you manage it?"

This lead to the discussion of the most difficult part of Julia's noble scheme—its practical *modus operandi.*

Julia had determined to "stay in town" this summer, in order to pursue this scheme under more favorable auspices than the winter season presented. During the summer, the "fashionable world," of which she was perforce, to a certain extent, a member, would be in the country or at the sea-side; her uncle and aunt would be at their villa near the Hudson, leaving their city house in charge of Julia and a poor female relative, who acted as housekeeper. Thus, our heroine would have a comparative freedom of movement and independence of action without observation.

It was a rather singular idea, this of Julia's remaining in the heated city during the summer months, with no companions save a young girl and an old relative. So Mr. and Mrs. Russell thought; but then Julia was "eccentric" and somewhat stubborn withal, so they allowed her to have her own way. And thus the matter was arranged.

As for the details of her scheme, it was determined between Julia and Mary that they should disguise themselves as effectually as possible when on their missions of mercy, and should work slowly (so as to attract no notice), but steadily. That they should use fictitious names and residences, and should carefully shun alike the attention of the world or the suspicions of those whom they visited, in regard to their real identity. They would learn what they could of the localities, etc., of the class of women they were to deal with, and would visit them in secret at these localities. True, this plan involved much that was disagreeable to the womanly instincts of our heroine and her companion; true, it embraced some suspicion and risk; true, it would by most be deemed Utopian and indelicate; it was certainly very strange. But Julia was a strangely noble woman, placed under remarkable circumstances, and saw but one fact—she could redeem others and, thereby, redeem herself. She saw this clearly, and she cared for naught beside.

CHAPTER V.

A VISIT TO A VICTIM.

In one of the minor streets of New York, a street which runs in the central portion of our city, near one of our principal thoroughfares, stands a row of houses, in their outward appearance plain and unpretending. It is to the interior of one house in this row to which we invite our readers to accompany us in imagination. The entry is narrow and dark, but the parlors are of a fair size, and well furnished. Though it is nearly noon, the windows of the parlor are almost entirely closed; still sufficient light from without penetrates to show us that the walls are elaborately papered, and are decorated with a number of fine prints and paintings of more than average merit. At each end of the room stands a large and expensive mirror. The apartment is well supplied with sofas, chairs and lounges, and an elaborately carved piano completes the array. In short, all the appointments of the parlor, carpet, window-curtains, and other etceteras included, are certainly comfortable, and *seemingly* respectable.

A colored woman is employed in the usual feminine morning occupation of "putting things to rights." While she is thus engaged, a ring is heard at the front-door bell. The old negro woman, for she is both old and ugly, and wicked looking to boot, cautiously answers the summons, and opens the street door, which has a sort of grating attached to it, opening from the inside. Two young women, dressed in the usual garb of females of the humbler class, shop-girls probably, are found standing on the steps, and desiring admission "to see Fanny Walters." The old negress, wondering at the object of the

visitors (for people do not generally call at the house in the morning, nor are the callers often of the female sex), replies that "Miss Walters is not up yet." On being told, however, by the young girls that they wish to see her particularly, she requests them to wait while she goes to deliver their message. She returns shortly, tells the young girls that she was mistaken, that Miss Fanny *is* "up" for the day, and desires them to walk up stairs to her apartment. They comply with the request, though there seems to be a strange nervousness and even timidity about them, as though they were penetrating into some dangerous or, at least, unknown locality—as if they were engaged upon some unusual and unfamiliar errand. They, however, follow the old negress, who conducts them up a flight of stairs, opens the door of an apartment on the second floor, and thus brings them into the presence of Miss Fanny Walters.

The apartment is even more comfortable and respectable-looking than the parlors which we have already seen. The room is of considerable size, with an elaborately-flowered carpet, a large, elegant bureau, dressing-case and wash-stand. The walls are beautifully papered, and various handsome prints adorn them; the subjects of these being seemingly mythological, representing the loves of the gods. They are free from positive vulgarity or indecency, but are *rather* highly colored—hardly the proper sort of thing to ornament a young lady's chamber. Various articles of bijou and nicknacks are scattered over the room, and one or two books lie upon the table. And upon the bureau and on the mantlepiece lie several daguerreotypes. On the mantlepiece also stands a clock of fanciful workmanship, the hands of which are now pointing to the hour of noon. Strange that a respectable young woman should be just rising from bed at noon-day! A half-open closet reveals a large assortment of dresses and all varieties of female apparel. And on the table an empty wine bottle and some glasses prove that the occupant of this apartment has at least luxurious tastes, to say nothing more.

In this room, clad in a hastily-donned morning wrapper, with

her hair and person generally *en dishabille*, stands Fanny Walters. She is a brunette, of a very dark hue of complexion, well built, of the average height, and very handsome. Her hair is long, dark, and rich ; she is evidently proud of it, and with just cause. Her eyes are deep black, quick, restless, fiery, expressive—indicative of a restless, fiery, passionate soul. Her mouth is almost perfect, so small, so exquisitely shaped, so temptingly delicious. Her hands are nearly as perfect as her mouth, and fairly sparkle with rings. Her feet are as beautiful as these most charming appendages of a pretty woman can be. Her form is full and luxuriant in its outlines, which, in her present dishabille, are plainly visible. Her neck and bust are splendid. She is, in short, a glorious creature. A woman full of passionate beauty and passionate life, full of witchery and enchantment ; a creature for whom, *if pure*, a man might worthily live and die ; a creature who, if worldly, debased, degraded, would be capable of luring a man to eternal destruction.

She stands in the centre of the apartment, and casts a glance at her visitors. She had evidently been expecting callers, but these are not they. As she makes this discovery, her glance becomes wondering, cold, suspicious, distrustful. She is, alas ! *not* accustomed to visits from the virtuous of her own sex, and the two young girls who stand before her are evidently not of her own class. She is well skilled in reading countenances, and she sees all this at once. What, then, can these two women want with her ? One of her visitors is a queenly-looking creature, spite her common garb, which does not seem somehow to belong to her. The other is a pretty, gentle young girl, evidently inferior to her companion. Now, reader, to save you all trouble we will simply inform you that the house we are now in is evil, that Fanny Walters is its inmate, and that her two disguised visitors are simply Miss Julia Witherson and Mary Barton, bound upon their self-imposed mission of love and redemption.

Fanny Walters turns to her visitors and asks :

" What do you want with me ? The servant told me two young women wished to see me ; and as I expected such about

this time, I told her to send you up. But you are not those I expected. What do you want with me?"

Now, reader, there are two ways of doing all things—the gradual way and the immediate method. Do you understand me? There are two ways also of reforming people—the slow, step-by-step plan (such as our heroine herself experienced), and the sudden, all-at-once method, as it were, which Providence sometimes adopts. The latter was the one which Julia, on this occasion, employed toward Fanny Walters. She merely replied to the question "What do you want with me?" by a look of tender pity, of holy compassion, and by the simple words, "I want to save you."

You can imagine the surprise that such an answer as this would cause under such circumstances to such a person as Fanny Walters, who asked, in utter astonishment:

"What do you mean? From what would you save me? What do you know of me?"

"Very little," replied Julia, "and yet too much—by far, too much. I have seen you on the street the last few days. Your dress, and manner, and bearing, the attention you excited, the averted looks of women, the bold looks of men—the men who joined you, were not these sufficient to tell one who was on the watch what and who you were? Unseen we followed you—we traced you here. You dropped this card with your name written upon it; we picked it up—we have come to save you."

"How did it concern you who or what I may be? Again I say, what do you want with me?"

Fanny had an exquisite voice; but now it sounded harshly and proudly—very differently from the syren tone with which she was wont to charm her adorers. But Julia's voice sounded like an angel's as she replied, earnestly, almost passionately:

"I want to save you from yourself—to save you from the life which you are leading, and from its certain consequence—destruction. Nay, you *must* hear me. You are sinning against God—that God whom *you know* exists. And your immortal soul will have to answer to Him at the last. Your life is a life

of shame. Nay, be as proud as you will, yet your life *is* shameful. All the decent and respectable of your own sex ignore you. All honorable men despise or shun you. But I *pity* you, I *love* you. You cannot be happy. You may paint, and you may dress; you may laugh, and you may sing; but your heart, alas! is wretched, and *you know it.* You cannot cheat yourself, though you may deceive the world. When you are alone, you are most miserable. You dare not think upon the past, nor yet upon the future. Your whole existence is merely one mocking, restless, noisy, worthless, wretched present. You are fit for better things. You are young and beautiful—made to be the light and centre of some pure and happy home. And you may be happy yet. Do not doubt it. You know me not, but as sure as there is a God in Heaven, I am your true friend. I am not what I seem. I have what influences the world—position, money. Abandon your present career, and trust to me. I will procure you a respectable, virtuous occupation; none shall ever know of your past life; you will be honest, happy, prosperous; you will be worthy of yourself. I have faith in you. Such a being cannot be utterly lost. I have known of others, alas! some not far distant, who have fallen as low, and yet have risen. You may yet be the honored, happy wife of some good man—who knows? Time, and penitence, and reform will purify you, and your early sin will be forgiven you—by God, at least, if not by man also. Believe me, there are many women like me in this world—women who are devoting themselves, for the sake of virtue, Heaven, and their own sex, to the welfare of their erring sisters. Listen to me, Fanny, *dear* Fanny—for so let me call you—listen to and be guided by me. Leave this vile place, and come with me. Come, as you dread future poverty, shame, the hospital, the almshouse, a pauper's burial, and a sinner's judgment. Come, for *memory's* sake, the memory of your childhood, of the days when you were pure. Come, for your sister's sake, if you have a sister. Come, for your *mother's* sake, come."

Julia speaks solemnly, tenderly, earnestly. She throws

her very soul into her every word; she is in the might of her cause, resistless; she seems a being inspired; she looks as grandly beautiful as any prophetess of the ancient oracles. Could an artist sketch her now as she stands, like a goddess in that room of iniquity, her eye full of a heavenly fire, tempered with a Christ-like gentleness, his fortune were forever assured. And Fanny stands beside her, with her dark expressive face, showing, in the restless workings of its lineaments the agitation of her soul. During the passionate address to which she has just listened, and which she has several times vainly endeavored to interrupt, her eye has now flashed defiance, and anon her lip has expressed an eloquent scorn. Then her form has towered in pride, then her features have been full of wonder, then they have grown thoughtful; and then it seemed as though a sudden determination was formed, and as rapidly, alas! abandoned. But when, at the last, one allusion is made to her childhood, her sister and her mother, "the woman" bursts forth, then tears fill her beautiful eyes, and angels in Heaven rejoice, for the sinner weeps. But her tears soon dry, her countenance changes; the habits and feelings of years are generally proof against sudden impulses or emotions. She is herself, her old, despairing, desperate, sinful self once more; and her voice, though no longer harsh, sounds, as it were, *hopeless*, as she says:

"You have touched me. Few, none for years, have spoken to me as you have spoken. I cannot understand *you* or your motives, but I *do* understand what you have said. It is very true, I suppose, I *know*, but it is too late to mend in *this* world. Thank God my mother is dead." (There is a desperate sadness, yet a fondness in these words which defies description). "She knows not what her child has become. My sister, too, is *safe*. She will never be what I am. But it is too late for me to repent or to reform. I hate my present life, and yet it is the *only* one that I *can* ever lead. See what a thing I am! You, even *you*, who profess to care for my welfare, even

you have to *disguise* yourself and visit me by stealth. No no, I must be hopeless, but *gay*, too. Oh, *very* gay. 'Repentance,' 'atonement,' 'honesty,' 'virtue,' 'love,' what are these to *me* but empty words? Names of impossible and useless things. *A short life and a merry one.*" (Gods! the tone in which she utters these words is sufficient to make one's flesh creep with horror.) "And no almshouse or hospital for me. When I think I have lived long enough, why, *poison is cheap, and New York has two rivers!* You see I have all my plans laid. I tell you it is too late to change them. I say it is too late." She fairly *hisses* the last words.

"Oh, for your soul's sake, for your dead mother's sake," cries Julia, "do not talk so. It is never too late. While there is life there is hope. While a woman has breath she can repent and be forgiven. Listen."

Seating herself by the window, Julia takes from her pocket a small Bible—a book which has, of late, been her constant companion. She opens the sacred volume, reads the story of the penitent thief upon the cross, the story of the woman taken in adultery, and then the exquisite parable of the Prodigal Son; thus showing from holy writ that truly it is never too late for the penitent sinner, and that the repentant wanderer—man or woman—*has only to return to be forgiven!*

It is a scene, once witnessed, never to be forgotten. There in that house—there in that room—there by the window—sits the once doubting and erring Julia, reading the Scripture of Christ to one who is, indeed, in need of a Redeemer. The sunlight falls upon the reader's head like the blessing of Heaven, or as though it were a smile from the spirit-lips of Fanny Walters' dead mother; a dead mother rejoicing over the prospect of her living, erring child's salvation. In the centre of the apartment stands the lovely sinner, Fanny herself, listening to the unfamiliar words of God. Her magnificent breast heaving wildly, her magnificent eyes full of the heart's emotions, while in the back-ground stands the gentle,

wondering, loving, pitying, hoping, pretty Mary Barton whose experience has never paralleled an interview like this. And then the room itself, filled with every sign of artificial riotous life, while through the window comes a glimpse of a bright summer sky, and from the outside is heard occasionally the song of a bird whose cage is suspended from the casement.

As Fanny Walters listens to the old and *once* familiar Bible stories, her heart goes back to the Sunday-school and village church of her early days, and a fierce struggle takes place in her inmost soul—a struggle which shall decide her destiny—a contest between the evil and the good, the God and the Demon within her. But her strong, passionate nature, the habits of her present life, and, above all, her creed of fatalism and despair, her belief that "it is too late," prove too powerful for the good angels that have come to her rescue; and she suddenly bursts forth, exclaiming:

"No more of this, no more of this, I tell you. Once for all, it is too late; besides, I *must* have one thing before I die. I will have it."

"And what is this one thing?" asks the disheartened Julia.

"*My revenge*" is the unchristian but passionate reply; "my revenge upon the man whom *I once loved*—who *said* that he loved me—the man who has made me what I am now and ever must be." And as she utters these words her form dilates, her eyes flash, her dark face seems on fire, she clenches her beautiful hands, and then she continues, hurriedly, excitedly—"Listen: I was born in the country. My mother died when I was but a mere child, leaving me and a little sister to the charge of my father, a rich farmer. We resided near a lake, near, also, to a pleasant little village. For several years I was perfectly happy, and won the love of the only son of the clergyman of the village. He was not rich, but my father liked him and had money enough for us both. My lover was reserved, studious, undemonstrative, but he loved me truly. I knew, I felt it. Oh, my God, how

happy we might have been! But in an evil hour a stranger came one summer to our quiet neighborhood. He stayed a day or two at the village tavern, but my hospitable old father met him, took a fancy to his handsome face, for he *was* handsome. I, too, met him. He fascinated me irresistibly. I knew not why or how, but that man soon became master of my whole soul. My true, faithful lover, the man to whom I was engaged, was forgotten in my madness. The stranger prolonged his stay; the fishing, he said, was so much finer than he had expected. My father and my lover suspected nothing. One afternoon we, this stranger and I, took a sail upon the lake. He told me he loved me; and I, the betrothed of another, listened, and confessed a mutual passion. He professed honorable intentions, but asked me to conceal our secret from *all* parties. Several times he attempted my ruin, but it was in moments of passion, and so infatuated was I that I forgave him, as in eloquent words, after each offence, he plead for pardon. But one evening we took a long ride together. He drove me to a lonely part of the country. We took supper at a wayside inn. *He knew* its character. I did not. I suppose the wine he ordered must have been drugged, the coward, for I remember nothing saving that in a few hours I found myself forever lost. In my rage I could have slain him and myself; but he pacified me with excuses, protestations of *honorable* designs, love and marriage. We returned late at night to my anxious father, gave the pretext of having lost the road, &c.; and the next day my betrayer gave me the slip, and left the neighborhood. Maddened, scarcely knowing what I did, I revealed my shame. My father cursed me, and I left *home*" (what an indescribable accent of agony she gave to that familiar word) "forever My father lost his mind and then his property, and then died My poor lover still lives, but has never *smiled since*, and my little sister suddenly disappeared. I came to New York, and have been for years what I now am. But I shall yet be revenged. I am on his track. The name I knew him by

was assumed; but I have ascertained that he lives in this city; and by all that is sacred or devilish he shall *die in this city* yet, and by this hand. I have sworn it. He has murdered me; aye, *murdered* me, as much as if he had stabbed me to the heart; and he *shall die*, and by this hand. Something tells me I shall live to find him yet. Oh God! how I did love that man once. Was he not handsome?"

So saying, she points to a daguerreotype lying upon the table. Julia glances at it, and her heart beats strongly with a strange presentment. The glance confirms her thought. Reader, it is the likeness of Henry Hericot. Yes, the betrayer of Julia—the would-be seducer of Mary Barton—is the man who is responsible to earth and to Heaven for the ruin, body and soul, of Fanny Walters.

But the excited Fanny who, overpowered with her emotions, now hid her face in her hands a moment, does not witness the sensations of her companion at beholding the daguerreotype of their betrayer, else a suspicion might have been excited, a clue might have been given to Fanny, as to the personality and locality of her seducer, which she might have followed literally "to the death." But Julia's emotion at her new discovery soon subsided. And then she renewed with redoubled earnestness, her appeals to her "erring sister," to abandon her present life. Julia said not a word concerning Fanny's plan of vengeance. Now is not the time for reproof or persuasion on this subject. The great point now to be obtained is to lead her first to another and better sphere of existence; all else is to be gained afterwards. Besides, spite of her Christianity, Julia's nature feels that Fanny's revenge is natural, almost justifiable. Seduction is as great a crime as murder, and even the Book of books says, "He that sheddeth man's" (or woman's) "blood, by man" (or woman) "shall his blood be shed." Be that as it may, Julia now makes a last effort to bring back the wanderer; but, alas! in vain. Fanny's hot, passionate, desperate nature has now got the upperhand; her past wrongs, her future revenge, are now prominent in her

mind ; and the golden occasion of repentance and reformation is lost.

A noise is heard outside on the stairs, laughter, and loud conversation. Fanny turns to her companion. "These," she says, "are *the friends*" (a bitter, sarcastic emphasis is laid upon this last word) "whom I told you I expected. They are coming up to see me. Such as you should not meet such as they are. You must go. I do not understand you, but I know what you have endeavored to do for me ; and, believe me, though it is all in vain, I shall never forget it. God bless you" (how strange it sounds to hear a wretched, hopeless, godless woman say "God bless you"). "Good bye. Nay, do not stay. You must go, and at once." Then, as her new, true friends, as the disappointed Julia and Mary slowly moved towards the door of the apartment, the passionate, beautiful, ill-fated, desperate Fanny suddenly rushed to them, kissed them, and taking Mary's handkerchief and Julia's Bible (which our heroine still held in her hand) said, "Farewell forever. I shall keep these as memorials of this visit, as keepsakes of you. Good bye—God bless you." She opened the door, and her new friends, her would-be redeemers departed.

They met on the stairs two gaudily dressed young women, the looseness of whose manners was emblematic of the looseness of their morals, and Julia sighed as she thought that these creatures were "the friends" of Fanny. They also encountered the old negress, and caught a glimpse in the passage of the bloated figure, the cruel face, and the slovenly dress of the "landlady" herself—a wretch, at the very sight of whom Julia shivered with disgust and loathing. At last they gained the "street door," and thus ended their morning's visit to a victim.

CHAPTER VI.

THE SISTERS; OR, NONE ARE ALL EVIL.

About twenty miles from New York, near a pleasant little village, is situated "a boarding school for young ladies." It is not a school, thank Heaven, of the usual kind, where a young girl is taught everything that is fashionable, nothing that is valuable; where she is instructed in the elegantly useless branches to the exclusion of all that is solidly useful; where she is put into the hands of the music-master, and the professor of languages, and the dancing professor, but seldom sees the inside of a kitchen or of an English grammar; where she becomes fluent in French, perfect in the polka, *au fait* in every vanity, but grows as heartless as elegant, as extravagant as useless, and as irreligious as accomplished. Neither was this school conducted on the "cramming system," which is so prevalent in many of our seminaries. The course of study did *not* embrace all conceivable branches of knowledge, all varieties of learning, whether valuable to the female scholar or not. No, the school in question was a religiously-conducted, sensibly-ordered institution, where the pupil was educated in the useful as well as the ornamental branches, and where the morals were taken care of as well as the mind. The number of pupils was limited; they were taken at an early age and trained gradually, faithfully, pleasantly, and surely, into right modes of thinking and of living. It was not, therefore, a popular school; but it was, nevertheless, a very good one. The head of the establishment was an old lady, who, having honorably reared several daughters of her own, knew how to bring up the children of other people.

Among the scholars was a bright, fine-looking girl of about

fifteen years of age, who had been placed here several years ago by her sister, who, though she never took the child home with her, came regularly to see her young relative. The girl's name was Annie Watson, and nothing was known of her, saving that she was a talented, good child, and was very much attached to her sister, who seemed to be her only living relation, and who paid the expenses of her education. It was a hot day, and the boarding-school for young ladies, near the village of —— was very still, as becomes a school during the "summer vacation." The building was large and by no means inelegant, and was pleasantly situated on a grassy lawn, with fine, large woods behind it, and the village at some distance to the front. It was almost the hour of noon, and a small band of pupils who (either from the space that separated them from their homes, or from some other reason) still remained at the seminary, notwithstanding the holidays, were enjoying themselves as best they could in the woods back of their home. And to judge by the shouts of merry laughter that were wafted upon the air, the group were happy enough. Children, thank God, are generally light-hearted; it is only when we cease to be children that we cease to be happy. One of the gayest of the party was Annie Watson. Her laugh was loudest, her song was merriest, her step was fleetest. She seemed the spirit of fun incarnate. Generally inclined to thought, to-day she is embodied merriment.

> "Oh, sunny days of childhood;
> Oh, blessed hours, when care
> Was but a myth, and pleasure
> And peace were everywhere."

But suddenly Annie Watson started from her companions, and looked for a moment intently at a female figure advancing from the seminary towards the spot where she and her comrades were sporting. Yes, she recognizes the figure. It is that of her sister, her dear, elder sister, her almost mother, who has come to pay her a visit; and, not finding her in the house, has sought her in the woods. With a glad cry of delight, Annie rushes

and meets the figure half way; and throws herself into her sister's arms.

"Dear, darling sister, how glad, how very glad I am to see you! I have been wanting you so much."

"And I you, dear Annie," replies her visitor, kissing her fondly.

The two, enticed by the beauty of the day, resolve upon having a stroll through the woods, "all to themselves," as Annie expressed it. They accordingly saunter away together, arm in arm, and it would have been evident to the most casual observer that a more than common bond of love existed between them. Especially did the stranger, the elder one (a fine-looking creature, beautiful, luxuriously attired, and yet evidently not a happy woman), seem to be tenderly attached to her young and innocent companion, mingling with the fondness of a sister the yearning love of a mother. Every now and then she would kiss "her darling Annie," as she called her, and stroke her hair fondly, and call her every endearing name. On reaching the woods the pair seated themselves under one of the oldest, largest and most leafy trees, and entered into an animated and loving conversation. The younger sister spoke of her studies, of "the fun she had during the nice vacations," of the other girls, and similar topics; while the elder listened with the warmest interest, making tender inquiries as to the health and personal comfort of the speaker. But when the child spoke of the morning and evening prayers, and reading of the Bible, to which she was accustomed, a close observer (had such a third party been present) would have noticed a momentary confusion on the part of the listener; a blush of shame, it might be, tinging the cheek of the elder sister. The confusion increased and the blush deepened as the child spoke in an earnest, loving way of the pure, virtuous teachings she and her companions daily received from "*dear* Mrs. Norton" (the head of the school). One would almost have thought the elder sister imagined that the youthful being beside her was reproaching her with a lack of the religion and virtue which had been taught the child herself. And yet

when the latter had finished her narration, the elder folded her in a loving embrace, and said, most tenderly yet solemnly:

"Annie, darling—Annie, darling, take care that you ever bear in mind your dear Mrs. Norton's precepts. You never can be happy in this world unless you are good. Be religious, be virtuous; love your books, and your—your Bible, and your—your God" (she hesitated strangely about uttering those two simple, common words, "God" and "Bible"). "Live good, pure, holy, and then you will live and die happy." And yet there seemed to be a sort of despair in the tone in which she gave this truly sisterly advice, as though, right as it was, she could never follow it herself. But this mayhap is merely our own fancy. At any rate, the innocent Annie Watson notices nothing of the matter, and suddenly exclaims: "Oh, sister, I would so like to go with you to the city, now and then. Why don't you take me to your home sometimes during vacations?"

Why not, truly? 'Tis a very simple and natural question. Yet it causes the one of whom it is asked to turn first pale, and then red, as she replies: "How often must I tell you, dear Annie, that I do not wish your mind to be taken off from its studies until you have completely finished your education?"

"Oh, God, if she did but know what a hell my home, as she calls it, is!" But these last strange words are muttered, not spoken, and her young sister does not hear them, and asks: "Where do you live, sister? Why must I always direct my letters to some box at the post office, and not to you at your own house? And why must I call myself Watson, when I know that our father's name was not Watson? Poor father! how I think about him sometimes. He used to love you so. And how sorry I feel, sister, to think that you had that great trouble with him, whatever it was about. And how do you live, sister? Are you rich? Are you married?"

Strange questions these for one sister to ask of another Stranger yet that a sister should be unwilling or unable to answer them! Yet these questions are *not* answered. But the elder sister evades reply (it seems as though every word of her

companion had been a stab at her heart), and the conversation changes.

Soon the sound of the dinner-bell is heard from the piazza of the seminary, and the merry party of hoydens, joined by the two sisters, return through the summer heat and beauty to the quiet house. There the principal, a capital old lady, meets the visitor, and politely invites her to dine with them ; an invitation gladly accepted. The meal is wholesome, abundant, and well cooked, far different from the poorly served, scantily supplied tables which are to be found in the majority of our schools. The repast is enlivened by conversation, and is a pleasant affair.

After dinner, the whole party amuse themselves with a game of romps in-doors, in which the visitor heartily participates, and instantly becomes popular with the children. She enjoys the unusual fun ; perhaps she is happier, really happier, playing with the children than she has been for years. She forgets, for the while, her sorrows, perchance the sins of her life ; the desperate look departs momentarily from her beautiful face ; would to Heaven that she had never been doing aught else save romping with the children.

But in course of time the little party separate (as all parties do), the game of romps ends (as all games must), and the two sisters, arm in arm, return to their woodland solitude. They seek the deepest shade, for it is now very warm ; and, in their leafy shelter, they converse. Suddenly Annie exclaimes :

" This is just the kind of a place that dear father used to love to take a nap in on the summer afternoons." Then the child paused, as though in thought, and softly murmured, " Poor father !" There was little in the words, but much in their tone. And the tears rushed into the eyes of the elder sister as she listened. True, too true, " poor, poor father !" But away with melancholy ; those who have real sorrows never can afford to indulge in unavailing ones.

" How beautiful the sky looks, seen just over the top of the trees, Annie !"

" Yes, dear sister ; I sometimes think, I know it is very fool-

ish, but I cannot help it, that God's face must be blue. It is such a lovely color, and seems so pure. And then I fancy that God's eyes must be stars; so that he must look, when smiling, just like the heavens upon a moonlight night. Just as they looked last night, sister. You saw the sky last night, didn't you?"

"Yes, it was a beautiful night." Ah, Annie, we fear that your sister does not often look upon the skies at night.

"Oh, I thought of you all last evening, dear sister," said Annie. "I wondered what you were doing, and whether you ever thought of me. And then I took a book and read about great men and heroes. Did you ever meet a hero?"

"Who—*I*?" replied the elder sister, bitterly. "I meet with heroes! Ah, Annie, darling, you are very young or else you would know that heroes are very *un*common. About one man in a million is noble; the rest are mean, selfish, heartless; liars and hypocrites, all." She spoke as though she had felt by experience the truth of her words. If so, God help her. God help all women who think of men thus.

"Oh, sister, how can you talk so?" rejoined Annie. "There must surely be many good people in the world. Else how could there be a good God to govern it?"

Ah! the logic of children is often irresistible.

The conversation went on, and the afternoon waned on, and at last the elder sister, rising, said it was time for her departure to the city. And again the younger one makes a remark which, simple as it is, causes a pang to shoot through every fibre of her sister's being. "Why must you go to-day? Why not wait till to-morrow? You never stay with me over night. What can you have to do at nights in the city always?"

"What can she have to do at nights?" Ah, Annie Watson, or whatever your name may be, you should not have asked this question. The farewell kiss is given and taken; the sisters have separated. Annie Watson returns to her school-mates, and her sister hastens in the evening train to New York. The "elder sister" of this chapter, reader, is no one more or no one less than *the Fanny Walters of the last!*

It will be remembered that in the story of her life, narrated to Julia, Fanny had spoken of a younger sister, a child, who, after her father's misfortunes and death, had disappeared. This child was the present Annie Watson, and had been taken away through Fanny's own agency, who, on hearing of her father's death as an almost pauper, determined to take care of her orphan sister, and to support her in comfort and honor, even though it were by her own earnings of shame. She resolved that though her fall had caused *his* pecuniary ruin and death, it should not, at least, injure *her* only relative still left—the "little sister" who had always loved her, and looked up to her as a mother—she who had wondered at her flight and her father's anger, though hardly old enough to know the cause. Fanny Walters, therefore, took her sister, placed her at the school just mentioned, impressing upon her the necessity of adopting an assumed name (the reasons which led Fanny to this step can readily be imagined), and there, kept in blessed ignorance of her beloved one's true life and character, Annie Watson grew up contented and virtuous. While the "elder sister," she who was so determined upon the peace and holy happiness of her self-imposed charge, meanwhile revelled in noise, and gilded gaudy wretchedness! Such are the wonderful contrasts and inconsistencies of human nature, even of nature in the same individual!! Such are the facts which go to prove that a bad *woman* may yet be a good *sister!* Such are some illustrations of the great truth that *none are wholly fallen*—that some gleams of Heaven can still be found even in the bosom of a modern Magdalene!

NOTE.—This chapter is not a fancy sketch. We *know* of an unfortunate woman who is, at this moment, supporting, under similar circumstances, a sister whom she tenderly loves. Truth is stranger than fiction.

CHAPTER VII.

A STRANGE MAN AND STRANGE MUSIC.

Not far from the residence of Mr. Russel, Julia's guardian, lived a rich, but odd family by the name of Kincarde. The family consisted of Mr. and Mrs. Kincarde, Miss Jeannette and Miss Eliza Kincarde, Mr. Shiner (Mrs. Kincarde's brother, who was familiarly called "old Uncle Shine"), and Miss Claude Clarke, a relative of the family, from the country, who served as a "companion" for the young ladies.

The family were rich, very rich, having an extensive factory, etc., a fine town house, a cottage at the sea shore, horses, carriages, and many servants. All the members of the family were warmly attached to each other. The men were capital "men of business," and Mrs. Kincarde, "the old lady," was a woman of very strong mind; but all the family, without exception (saving Miss Claude Clarke), were ignorant, uneducated, low in their tastes, strange in their dress and notions, extravagant, purse-proud and irreligious. The men were "infidels," the mother was a part "skeptic" and part "spiritualist," while the daughters, to use a common expressive phrase, "were nothing." All the family were very ugly also, repulsive, strange, and some of them filthy in their personal appearance. Mr. Kincarde was a "hard drinker;" his wife was a "vegetarian;" the girls, as well as their mother, were passionately addicted to gaudy dresses. All the family had thin lips, expressive of their sharp tempers, which latter found a vent occasionally in "family jars," which seldom resulted, however, in anything serious. A shrill, unpleasant voice was also a general characteristic of the Kincardes. They lived, as before remarked, in fine

style, but the arrangements of their dwellings, were "odd," their furniture was "odd," their library, such as it was, was of a peculiar character, and though of low extraction, of "mechanical origin," the women of the family were as haughty a trio of females as could be found in New York city, or elsewhere.

They were of New England, "Down East," or "Yankee" origin, Kincarde being by trade a carpenter, and Shiner a locksmith. But they were industrious and shrewd; and Shiner, having invented and perfected some improvements in machinery, assisted therein by his sister, who married Kincarde, he took his brother-in-law into partnership with him and commenced business. The firm was soon extended by the admission of two brothers by the name of Holt, who furnished capital. In course of time the Holts were "removed" by some chicanery, though their capital was retained, and the firm of Shiner & Kincarde soon became rich and settled permanently in New York. They prospered exceedingly, but were as "mean" to others (though more extravagant towards themselves) in their days of wealth as in their season of poverty. In short, the only being under the roof of the Kincardes who was truly "human" and truly loveable, was the "poor companion," Miss Claude Clarke.

* * * *

It is a pleasant afternoon, and Mr. George H. Shiner ("Uncle Shine") is busy in his room, the third story front of the city residence of the Kincardes.

Mr. Shiner is an old man, and a very ugly one. He is very thin, very short, and very angular, and ungraceful in form; his eyes are small, sharp, restless, shrewd but unpleasant; his cheeks are colorless and sunken; his lips thin, while his hair, though white, is coarse and scanty; his hands and feet are extraordinarily large in proportion to his size; and his movements are as clumsy as those of a bear; he has a peculiar habit of almost constantly moving his head up and down, like one of those toy figures we see in the windows;

and his smile is a very disagreeable thing to behold; it is so bitter, and yet so ghastly, so corpse-like.

This singular looking being is dressed in as singular a garb. It consists of a very old-fashioned, very long-tailed coat, almost an overcoat, buttoned closely round the form, so that scarcely any shirt is visible; and a drab pair of pantaloons, very short, not reaching to the clumsy, common, dirty boots which cover his large feet. The whole suit could not be sold at any price to any old clothes vender; for the very poorest old clothes vender in town would refuse to purchase it. Mean as the suit is, it is nearly threadbare, and is very dirty besides—like his linen, full of spots and stains. Take Mr. George H. Shiner altogether, and you might easily find a more suitable model for a Romeo, a Claude Melnotte, or even an old gentlemon.

The appearance of the room is as strange as that of its occupant. It is, generally speaking, very cheaply, in fact, meanly furnished. A plain washstand, a common bedstead, two or three of the most ordinary chairs, a rough settee, a cheap, small, second-hand, old bureau, a small glass, and a writing table comprise the furniture. Not a print or painting hangs upon the walls, and the carpet is merely a collection of rags. So far all is typical of the meanness and avarice of "Uncle Shine." But there are other objects in the room which speak of his better qualities. We do not allude to that small "safe" there, in the corner by the bed; for in that he merely keeps money, mortgages, notes, deeds, his will, and the like. But we refer, first, to that model of a machine, which shows his mechanical skill, and which is placed nearly in the centre of the room. And, second, to that piano which stands near the window. Now a machine and a piano may seem strangely out of place in a bed-room. So they are. But, then, Uncle Shine is a very strange old man. And, besides, this apartment is not merely his bed-room, but he has taken a queer fancy to it, and prefers spending his leisure time in it rather than in any other room in the whole house. So that, after all, it is not so odd that he should in this apartment seek to gratify his three great passions—his avarice, by the mean

furniture and the well-filled safe ; his love of mechanics, by his model ; and his fondness for music by means of the piano.

On the mantle-board, over the fire-place, lie a few books, conspicuous among which is a large, well-bound copy of Tom Paine's Age of Reason.

On the floor, near the model, is negligently thrown a rich cushion. One of his nieces paid a visit to "Uncle Shine" in his room recently, and brought this cushion (to which she was very partial) to sit upon. And when she left, she had forgotten to take back the cushion with her. So there it remained still, upon the floor, near the model. It is important that the reader should bear in mind this cushion.

We said that Uncle Shine is busy ; we were correct—busy he is.

He goes to his safe, opens it, and takes from it an envelop. It is filled with bank-notes of large amount. He counts the notes carefully, twice. They are all right—five thousand dollars ; a valuable envelop, truly. Good God ! how many crimes have been committed, how many souls have been lost, for less, much less, than the value of this envelop ! Good God ! how many men who have died upon the gallows, would have died good citizens ; how many women who sin upon our streets, would have lived happy and virtuous wives and mothers, had they but possessed the value of this envelop ! Oh, money, money, wonder of wonders, who can understand thee ! But these are *our* reflections, not those of Uncle Shine, who proceeds to take from the safe other envelopes similarly filled. He counts these ; these too are all correct in amount. How could they be otherwise ? Does he not keep the key of the safe himself, after locking it most carefully (and the lock, by-the-by, is a very peculiar one, and defies picking) ? But then it is a habit of his to count his money nightly. And to-night he calculates that he has forty-five thousand dollars in notes in his keeping—or, rather, in that of his safe's ; and this is all his own. Besides some thirty thousand dollars in bank, and about six times that amount invested in first class city mortgages, and in various "outside" securities,

which yield him much more than legal interest. About a quarter of a million of dollars, besides the money invested by him in the firm of Shiner & Kincarde. As the old man thinks of his immense possessions, his soul swells with pride—the pride of success and power. Ugly, as he is, ugly and little, dirty and awkward, he seems almost sublime as his eyes glisten and his frame dilates with the superb, supreme consciousness of wealth. And he looks from his envelopes, deeds, and notes out into the clear and beautiful sunlight of Heaven with a smile, not this time bitter and ghastly, but almost regal. For is he not a king? Cannot he command more than two hundred and fifty thousand dollars worth of virtue, vice, talent, folly, pleasure, or what else he may desire? Cannot he, if he chooses, buy and sell men, women, children, hearts, consciences and souls? Ugly and dirty as he is, is he not more than a king? Is he not a god? For are not riches this world's deities? And is he not rich? And gods cannot die? Old as he is, why should he then fear death? Why should he have taken the useless trouble of making a will? And in a sudden transport of frenzy *he tears up the will* which he last month made.

Now this destruction of "the last will and testament of George H. Shiner" was the unwitting work of a moment; but its consequences were of the utmost importance to several of the personages of our narrative; as we will see hereafter.

Uncle Shine, after his fit of momentary *monetary* frenzy had passed, was rather ashamed of himself, and regretted the tearing of the will. But, determining to draw up a new one, he replaced his valuable envelopes, deeds, etc., in the safe; and then betook himself to the examination of his model machine.

'Tis a singular affair, full of wheels, cranks and contrivances—an intricate arrangement, which none could comprehend save himself; but to him it is as plain as the sun at noon-day. He can see at a glance the general idea of the whole, and the particular service of each special part. For is he not the inventor? Mr. Shiner is as great a mechanical genius as he is essentially a mean man; and his keen old eyes sparkle as he inspects his

model. It embodies a new discovery in mechanics ; he confi dently expects ere long to present it to the world—to reap fame and additional fortune from it. Odd as Uncle Shine is, let us reverence him as he kneels beside his model, and handles it with almost a parent's love. For our ideas are our children, are they not? And glorious children they are, too ; though they ofttimes disappoint their parents.

Having devoted an hour to his model, he now betakes himself to the piano. 'Tis a magnificent instrument—one of the finest, probably, in existence. He has spared no expense to procure it ; he loves it more than aught else on earth or elsewhere, saving his money and his model. He opens it, and, spite of his aged fingers, evokes music from its keys, music which a much younger man need not have been ashamed of.

But the old man, having at last exhausted his repertoire of harmony, rises, closes the instrument, and emersed in a sudden sea of thought, walks up and down the apartment. And now a little incident occurs—a little incident which might have been a tragedy ; a little incident which shows how close are the confines of those two great kingdoms, Life and Death. While the old man is thus thinking and walking, he stumbles, his foot is caught in the rags which serve as the carpet of the rich miser's room, he falls heavily, and strikes the cushion which, as before described, lies upon the floor, directly next to the model machine. Had he fallen but a few inches more to one side, he would have struck the iron work of the model, and the shock would probably have killed him. Yes ; the rich man would then have become mere clay—clay not worth the buying of the poorest man on earth. All his mortgages, investments, and bank accounts would have been unable to save him. He has escaped eternity by a few inches and a cushion ! But is he thankful to Providence for this escape, this cushion, and these inches? Not he. He acknowledges no Providence to thank. With a curse, which sounds horribly upon his aged and withered lips, he rises. He is not seriously hurt, and soon recovers from the shock of his fall.

But in passing his hands over his person, to ascertain whether

he was injured by his accident, he encounters something in one of his lower pockets (which he very seldom uses), which from the feel of it he supposes to be a book. He thrusts his hand in, and ascertains that his surmise is correct. It *is* a book. But how did it get there? Who placed it in his pocket? Certainly not he himself, for he never carries books about with him. But what is the book? It is a small volume bound in black. 'Tis a copy of the New Testament, and with Claude Clarke's name on the fly leaf. "Damn that girl," the old man cries, "will she never cease trying to *convert* me, as she calls it? She is constantly attempting some pious trick like this upon me. Slipping Bibles into my coat pockets, and so on. But it is of no use, Miss Clarke. It is of no use. The old man is not to be fooled at his time of life." And so saying, in a fit of anger, he throws the Testament out of the window. The time may come when the old man will be sorry for this act.

Uncle Shine then takes down from its resting place *his* bible, called "The Age of Reason," by Tom Paine, (the greatest *blackguard* of his century), and begins its perusal for the hundredth time. There he sits, by the window, that ugly, dirty, strange, mean, gifted, rich, old, white-haired man, in his oddly-filled room, with the piano, and the model, and the safe, and the paltry bed-room furniture; there he sits, by the window, with the calm sunlight of a lovely autumn afternoon falling upon him from God's Heaven; there he sits, tottering on the very verge of eternity, reading a work of lies and blasphemy, with Claude Clarke's Testament in the gutter of the street, many feet below him.

He sits and reads the Age of Reason until the growing darkness prevents him. Then he muses in the darkness on his money and his model.

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A few hours have elapsed, and "Uncle Shine," Mrs. Kincarde and Miss Eliza Kincarde are seated in their sumptuous but oddly-furnished parlor, engaged in animated conversation. There seems to be a difference of opinion existing

between Mr. Shiner and his niece, while the mother inclines now to one side of the argument, now to the other, and seems endeavoring to reconcile both the disputing parties. But in vain. Eliza Kincarde is as sharp-tempered and as obstinate as Mrs. Kincarde herself, and is, in fact, the only one of the family who is not altogether under the influence of her mother. And so the war of words wages on between the old man and the young woman. The subject of the quarrel is one of great interest to all ladies in general, *i. e., a young man* who is "paying attentions" to Miss Eliza Kincarde, and who is as much liked by the niece as he is detested by the uncle. The latter says that the young man shall *not* continue his visits, the former says that he *shall*, and neither party seems disposed to yield. "Behold how great a matter a little fire kindleth" (for "little fire" in this case read "young man"). In the course of the evening a compromise is nominally agreed to between "Uncle Shine" and Miss Eliza; but it is only a hollow truce, and the old man retires for the night with an angry feeling in his heart towards his niece that produced the most important *pecuniary* consequences. As we shall see hereafter, that quarrel was the cause of Miss Eliza Kincarde losing a large part of a quarter of a million of dollars; for let it be remembered, Uncle Shine had torn up the *old* will (in which Miss Eliza Kincarde's name figured) and had *not yet* made a *new one.*

* * * *

Several days have elapsed. It is a warm and delightful evening, and an old man is walking leisurely along one of the most retired streets of our great city. On such an hour of such a night generally the whole population can be found seated at the windows, or on the door-steps of their houses. On such an hour of such a night the father of a family, compelled to remain in town by business, or from lack of the means essential to a watering-place or summer-retreat life, is to be seen out-doors chatting with his neighbor, and smoking his cigar. The children play around him, or run to

and fro in the hazy light. The lovers sit by the window, looking out on the night, with their hands secretly clasped, and (for all we know) occasionally a kiss, a sweet, soft, loving, summer-evening kiss, is given or received between them. While in the back-room, or possibly at the "other window," sits the old grandmother, watching the street children at their play, and thinking of those happy times long past when she, too, was a child, and loved the summer evenings dearly. And upon all alike, upon the father, the children, the lovers, and the grey-haired woman, almost too old to love, shine the delicately twinkling stars. Oh! there are few things more delightful than a summer's evening in the city, saving a summer's evening in the *country!*

But the street in which the old man is walking has but few signs of life, at least of out-door existence. It is a "retired," a "shabby-genteel" street, inhabited by those who "have once seen better days," and who are, therefore, not disposed in their declining fortunes to be very merry.

The old man does not look like one who ever troubles himself much whether an evening is a summery or a wintry one. He is very thin, short, and ungraceful, with small, sharp eyes, scanty, coarse white hair, large hands and feet, and is very clumsy in his movements. On his head he wears a very old, worn-out, high white beaver hat (this hat, we may remark, he invariably wears on all occasions); his coat is of a singular shape, length and pattern; his pants are of a dirty drab, and his boots are of a dirty brown, not having been made acquainted for some time with any species of blacking; he also carries in his hand, notwithstanding that there is *not* the slightest sign of rain, a huge common cotton umbrella. This is his constant companion. The old white hat and the cotton umbrella never desert him. His liner, too, is soiled, and his hands and face are by no means clean. Certainly he is *not* a gentleman; undoubtedly he is an odd character; probably he is a poor man; possibly a beggar, judging by his clothes, for his whole suit could not be sold

at any price ; and yet he may *not* be a beggar after all. Poor clothes sometimes cover rich men !

He has, too, we notice, a peculiar habit of almost constantly moving his head up and down, which is quite amusing. He also has a habit of muttering to himself, in a very low tone, it is true, yet clear enough, if we can only get close enough to him. But he passes on. Let us follow him.

Along the retired, quiet street he wends his way, muttering and bobbing his head as he goes. But he stops and listens intently. He hears the sound of music—nothing remarkable in that on a summer's evening. Yes, but it is not often one hears *such* music as this. 'Tis not mere melody, it is *inspiration.* The piano upon which it is played is a magnificently-toned instrument, and the person who is now performing, whoever he or she may be, is certainly a musician worthy of the instrument. The sounds proceed from yonder house, one of the few residences in this street which have any signs of life about them—that house yonder, with the front windows open. The old man glances at it, looks at the number ; he recognizes it—knows the house well. But what need a beggar care for fine music? At any rate, our supposed beggar *does* care for it. He advances to the windows, so eagerly listening to the harmony that he forgets even to nod his head, or to mutter to himself as usual. He reaches the window, and, being very short, stands, as it were, *under it,* almost hidden from view of any within the house Now the music ceases, and the queer old man gives vent to a curse, which sounds fearfully out of place on such aged lips. But the melody resumes again, even more gloriously than before. Gods ! what a magnificent ecstacy is true music ! Life hath no pleasure like the joy that lies in sweet sounds ! Now the strain is plaintive, thrilling the soul like, as it were, the tears of an archangel ! Anon the chords are tender, as though the fingers that pressed them were moved by impulses from a heart of love. Then the music grows merry awhile, and brings with it souvenirs of ball-rooms and

gorgeous festivals. Then again the harmonies become indescribably grand, grand as the choruses must be that are sung in the presence of Jehovah !

Truly there are heavenly charms in music. Truly the musician of to-night is a performer of no common order.

And under the open window stands the strange, ugly, dirty old man, with his white hat bobbing ceaselessly up and down, as his head keeps a sort of weird time to the music ; his old cotton umbrella, waving to and fro in the air, as a-la-Maretzek the old beggar leads some imaginary orchestra. Truly it is a very odd spectacle. Is the old man crazy as well as a beggar ?

But suddenly a child's voice is heard within the house, saying—

" Miss Julia, Miss Julia, what is that queer thing going about so, up and down, first to one side and then to the other, right at our window there ? Let me go and see what it is."

The child has caught an occasional glimpse of our music-mad friend, the beggar's, hat and umbrella, as they undergo their course of musical gymnastics outside. Pushing forward, the little girl sees the music-mad beggar himself.

For a moment the child gazes, open-mouthed, wide-eyed, at this singular spectacle ; uncertain whether to cry with fear, or to laugh ; for it is but a step from the terrible to the ludicrous, and what might frighten a child, when it is carried to too great an extent will only amuse it. At last the little girl burst into a hearty fit of laughter, the absurdity of the sight overcoming her wonder at it. It is too funny. And then she calls to her companion. " Oh, Miss Julia, come and look at this queer old beggar man, who dances so strangely. He looks for all the world like one of those monkeys on the top of one of those street organs. Come quick, and look at this funny old crazy beggar man."

Attracted by the child's exclamation, her companion, the performer who has raised this brilliant storm of harmony, leaves the piano, and advances to the window. She proves to be no other than our heroine herself. What does she here in this

third-rate house, in this third-rate, lonely street? At any rate, Julia Witherson it is.

But by this time, as the music has ceased, the old man in the street has somewhat recovered from his "temporary insanity." He ends his gymnastics. Perhaps, too, he is somewhat ashamed of himself. He now also notices the child looking intently at him, and leaning over her the form of Julia Witherson. And now the strange old man does another strange thing. He directly addresses himself to Julia. "Are you," he asks, abruptly, "the one who was playing upon the piano just now?"

Julia has been looking at the old man from head to foot He is an oddity certainly, both in appearance and character. But she is not certain that he is either a lunatic or a beggar. She can hardly tell why, but she instinctively forms the notion that he is not altogether what he seems. There is, to her at least, an indescribable, undefinable something about him which leads her to think that perhaps he may only be shabby and eccentric, not really insane or in want. His intelligent eyes and the ring on his finger, have not escaped her observation; for he is now very close to her, as she leans out of the window towards him. At any rate he is a "character;" the meeting with him is somewhat of an adventure; they are unobserved, and, as he is a very old man, he cannot compromise her; so Julia humors him, and replies to his question just recorded with a "Yes, I am."

"Can you play the 'Prayer' in Rossini's 'Moses in Egypt?'" he asks. Here is a question; such a one as he asking for the "Prayer" in "Moses in Egypt!" He is a fine figure for a connoiseur in music! A fashionable *habitué* of the opera, truly! Who on earth can he be? So thinks Julia. But she replies to this second question, also, in the affirmative.

"Play it for me," says the strange old man. Abrupt enough in all conscience. But something leads her to-night to humor this eccentric being. Perhaps it was fate that led her to be on this occasion so accommodating For certainly the whole destiny

of her future life was affected by her conduct this evening. She complies with the strange old man's strange request, and, re-seating herself at the piano, executes with skill and feeling Rossini's magnificent composition. Suddenly she is startled by the child's exclamation : "The old man is coming in here, Miss Julia!" True enough, the old man *is* ascending the front steps ; and as the door is open he enters the hall and advances towards the parlor. "This is a little too much," thinks our heroine, at first ; but she is in a peculiar mood to-night ; this man has exercised some mysterious fascination upon her, so her second thought is, "Let him come in. He is old and can do no harm. He will serve to amuse me." So she does not oppose his entrance.

The old man walks into the rather dilapidated room, which serves as the parlor of the house, seats himself near the piano with as much coolness as though the house was his own, and beckons to Julia to resume her playing, which she had ceased at the child's exclamation. Wondering at herself, Julia complies ; the stranger listening intently, and showing his delight by all manner of odd grimaces and gestures.

"Can you play any airs from Don Giovanni?" abruptly asks the old man.

"Certainly he cannot be what he seems," says Julia to herself. "No beggar could thus ask for and appreciate the Moses and the Giovanni! Who can he be? Perhaps he is himself some great artist. Artists are always eccentric. Be he whom he may, I will gratify my whim, and see this adventure to its end."

It is, indeed, an "adventure." Let us call it Providence.

Our heroine plays brilliant morceaux from Mozart's *chef-d'œuvre*, and then the insatiable beggar asks for more.

"Play me," he cries, "from Trovatore."

Still under the influence of her unaccountable fascination, Julia plays from Verdi.

"Magnificent!" exclaims the old man, "magnificent! What is your name, young woman?"

This is going *too* far. Julia refuses to give her name. But he insists.

"I have a reason for wishing to know," he says, "a reason that concerns yourself. If you refuse to tell me, I shall find it out in spite of you."

Moved by his earnestness, still under his magnetic influence, she at last gave him her name.

"Where do you live?" continued the inveterate questioner.

After another struggle, our heroine gave her residence also.

"You live near Mr. Russell's, then?" said the old man.

"Ah, I was right," thinks Julia, "he is not a beggar; only some eccentric, probably rich man. He knows my uncle." Then she continues, aloud: "I live with Mr. Russell. I am his ward and niece."

"Ah, then, I live near you. I will call and see you. You must play for me often. My name is George H. Shiner."

The mystery is out. She has heard her uncle speak of the Kincardes and the eccentric Shiner. She understands all.

"What are you doing here?" asks Mr. George H. Shiner.

That question our heroine stubbornly refuses to answer. But we will answer it briefly for her. Julia, whose charity is ever active, discovered some time since a lady "in reduced circumstances," a widow, and her only child, who had sought to hide their misery in this abode of genteel poverty. Miss Witherson sought them out, and delicately and kindly visited them, sympathized with and relieved them. She was on one of these visits of kindness to-night, and while the widow had retired to her room awhile, Julia remaining down stairs had delighted herself and her child-companion by performing upon the magnificent piano, the last relic of the former greatness of her "poor friend." While thus passing her time, Mr. Shiner had been won by the beauty of her melody, and the reader knows the rest.

But the reader does not yet know, for we now tell him, that this strange interview between Julia Witherson and Mr. George H. Shiner (who, by-the-by, was the landlord of the very house at which the meeting took place; a fact which may account for the coolness with which he entered it,) caused the most momentous consequences to the future life of our heroine; and not

only her, but Charles Singerly also. The reader may not see this now at this stage of the narrative. But he will appreciate it fully hereafter.

Julia often thought of this night's adventure, though she never mentioned the subject, saving on one occasion, to her uncle and aunt. And Mr. Shiner somehow never made his promised call.

But the old man did not forget our heroine. And when he made a new will sometime afterwards, in the place of the one he had destroyed (as recorded in the first part of this chapter), he did *not* include one name which should have been there—that of his rebellious and obstinate niece, Eliza Kincarde. But in its stead he inserted the name of a young lady whom we shall not mention here, as the reader can readily guess her identity, but who was famous for her musical accomplishments.

CHAPTER VIII.

A MISCELLANEOUS CHAPTER.

We are about to abandon the major portion of the personages of this story for a while, and to devote ourselves to the history of our heroine's investigations, adventures, and labors among the unfortunates of her sex. Ere we do so, however, let us take a brief, parting glance at the other characters who figure in our pages.

Charles Singerly, the poet, who now neglects his poetry, so far as a born artist *can* neglect his art, the extravagant young man, careless in his pecuniary matters, never having been taught, by experience, the true value of money, but whose follies are redeemed by a liberal and unselfish generosity, is devoting himself to dissipation. He drinks freely, carouses deeply, and leads a sadly wild existence, which gives his mother pain. But in the midst of his revels he sighs, as the image of Julia appears to his mind. It is his ill-fated love that drives him to revelry—that and the influence and example of his intimate friend, Henry Hericot, and the smiles of Miss Kate Somers and the rest of the "fashionable set."

But, after all, there is something noble in a free-handed dissipation like that of Singerly's, which is infinitely superior to the meanness of soul which sometimes serves for *prudence* in the young. And there is no real cause of alarm. The advice of the Rev. George Howard, the prayers and love of his mother and his own good sense, will subdue Charles Singerly at last. *Entre nous.* The present is the most luxuriant and last stage of his wild oats—hereafter they will steadily decline. He will become a wiser man at last—all the wiser for his early follies.

As for Henry Hericot, he is as superficially brilliant, as radically rotten, as a human being, by any possibility, can be. He

encourages Charles in all his errors, much to the displeasure of Mrs. Singerly, who detests Hericot; leads him from bad to worse, and meanwhile *lives off of* him; borrows large sums of his friend, which he never repays, and uses and *ab*uses Singerly in every sense.

As regards Julia, Hericot pursues no fixed plan; he cannot *understand* her, so he knows not what to do. He desires revenge upon her, and yet he would fain render her serviceable. Now, he makes marked advances toward our heroine, and when these are repelled, he as sedulously avoids her. He has also noticed Charles' attentions to Julia, and their very sudden cessation; there is a mystery here, too, which he cannot fathom; so he watches closely, but says nothing. He amuses himself between times with Katherine Somers, who loves him as truly as such as she *can* love; but who is too prudent to marry him, and who is also too cunning to allow herself to be betrayed by his arts. She is not virtuous at heart, but she is cold in blood and shrewd in head. As for Hericot he is aware of her *penchant* for him, but he spares her; she is useful to him in various *other* ways beside *the* way in which most women are useful to such as he. And so he passes his time —as gay and as evil a man as walks the earth; and worse than evil, contemptibly *mean*. So mean that he has retained in his possession a diamond cross given him by Julia Witherson when he vowed his false love to her in Paris. This cross is a very peculiar one, and very costly; it was a gift to Julia from her dead mother; but though our heroine has besought Hericot to return the cross to her, he retains it for its pecuniary value, hoping some day to obtain from Julia his own price for the relic. Noble man!

We may here remark, incidentally, that Julia, in her confession to Singerly, alluded to the circumstance of this retaining of the cross as an example of the character of the man who had betrayed her, though she did not mention his name. The personal identity of her betrayer was preserved as a secret by Julia, spite of all effort of Charles Singerly to discover it.

As regards the Rev. George Howard, we need say but little in this place. He simply did his duty, and served his Maker in the most acceptable manner—by serving his fellow-man. He

was no "orthodox" Christian—not he. He was no bigoted "formalist"—not he. He was not a parson according to Puritanical ideas. You could see him at a "party" occasionally, at the theatre and opera frequently. He believed that theatrical amusements were natural, therefore harmless in themselves and essential to enjoyment. True, they were abused, as all things are, but he was no fool to confound the abuse of an institution with its legitimate use ; and his observation had taught him that the only effectual way to correct the evils of the theatre was to lead the respectable and educated class of the community to patronize it, and, by patronizing, to *purify* it.

But while enjoying this world, our model priest also benefited it. He taught the noblest doctrines, practised the purest morality, and exhibited the most generous charity. And amid the excitement, temptations, and trials of this world he kept steadily in view the world to come. He was a true friend to Charles and Julia, a true priest to his flock, and a true servant to heaven.

Katherine Somers continued to flirt and talk scandal, to profess piety and to practise deceit. She read Bulwer in secret, and the Bible in public ; was precise in her tongue, and impure in her heart ; sought to marry Charles Singerly for his money, though she loved him not ; loved Hericot after a fashion, but married him not ; hated Julia, and watched her intercourse with Singerly jealously, though she claimed loudly to be our heroine's dearest friend ; and danced and dressed, or rather *un*dressed, through life as though it were a *bal masque*.

So much for so much ! And now for Julia Witherson.

BOOK THE THIRD.

OUR ERRING SISTERS.

CHAPTER I.

A SAINT AMONG SINNERS.

It may be readily imagined that Julia Witherson had considerable difficulty in carrying out the details of her strange woman-redemption scheme, and was obliged to resort to stratagem, disguise and artifice, so as to keep her work, her labor of purity and love, unknown to the heartless, impure, giddy world of fashion, of which she was a reserved and unwilling member. It is not, we think, necessary for us to enter into all the minute circumstances of our heroine's career, but merely to give the results of her mission, and to record some of the more striking scenes in which she figured. Her only confidant and assistant was Mary Barton; and the two women, hand in hand, and heart in unison with heart, went about the streets and lanes of our great city, like the Master of old, "doing good." May it not also be reverently said, "that the Holy Ghost was with them?"

In describing our heroine's adventures and experiences, we will simply be guided by the arrangement of time, treating of the events in the order of the date at which they occurred. Having described the practical experiences in Book Third, we will take occasion to discourse of the theories connected with the subject, and the lessons to be drawn therefrom in Book Fourth. We would also insist here upon an all-important point, that every chapter and character in this book is strictly found on fact—is not ideal but real.

* * * * * * *

It so chanced that the first three unfortunates whom Julia chanced to visit were past all earthly power of redemption. Let us, however, glance briefly at these cases. Failures are

often as instructive as success. So our heroine found them, and they but increased her ardor.

The first of these women was known to her companions by the name of "Emma." She was a tall, moderately thin, sharp-featured woman, of about twenty years of age, not bad looking, with fine hair and teeth, and (not an unusual gift in woman) a voluable tongue. But her speciality of character, the great feature of her disposition, was a quick temper, which the circumstances of her life had rendered positively malicious. This malice was principally shown towards the *men* with whom she was brought in contact; towards females she was tolerably amiable and sociable; but towards all members of the *male* sex she evinced a degree of malignity not often met with. This, of course, rendered her, spite of her pretty looks, unpopular. Still she persisted, and, on being reproved by females of her own class for her folly, she would commonly reply, with a fearful oath, "that had it not been for a man she would not have been what she was, and that she was determined to revenge herself upon the whole sex." And she kept her vow.

More than one man she had completely ruined, wheedling and fascinating him (she *could* fascinate when she chose) out of his money, and then abandoning him with scorn. One foolish fellow, who had admired her in the earlier part of her career, she had utterly destroyed in purse and in honor, having caused him to rob his employer to supply the funds for her extravagance. Another, still more foolish, had committed a most violent assault upon a man, of whom he was jealous on her account, and had received the reward of his folly by heavy damages, and a long imprisonment. Truly "Emma" kept her vow.

Now, we assure you, reader, that this is *not* a fancy sketch, and we ask you is not such a woman as this as dangerous to men as a tiger let loose in our streets? Is she not *more* terrible? for tigers cannot ruin reputations and kill souls. Yet this "Emma," this malicious feminine demon, was once

an amiable, confiding, innocent girl. She might have been an ornament to her own sex and a blessing to some honest man. But she was *betrayed*, and her whole life and character was changed. Reader, we ask you in all honesty, was not the man who first betrayed her really responsible for all the sins she afterwards committed, and for all the *sad results* of those sins?

Was not this a case in which seduction proved as great a crime as murder?

Julia met with this unfortunate, this dangerous woman; she endeavored to teach her *mercy* at least, if not purity. But in vain. Our heroine was repulsed, and "Emma" lived the usual life of "erring sisters," and died at last the usual death of such. And her remains were dishonored by the heartless jests of medical students, and the touch of the dissecting knife. Thus lived, thus died, the scorning and the scorned woman!

* * * *

Julia also endeavored to restore to a better and brighter career a woman of a much more amiable stamp than the one just mentioned. This new acquaintance (if we can be allowed the term) was a very brilliant, pretty girl, tall, black haired, with sparkling black eyes, and an exquisite mouth, which, when she smiled, rendered the expression of her countenance bewitching. Her name was "Fannie," and, like all Fannies (at least all the Fannies that we have ever met), she was charming. Her disposition was as delightful as her face and manner. She was always obliging, cheerful, generous; she had a fine voice, and was always singing; she had a fine figure, and was passionately addicted to dancing. To her female "friends" (such as they were) she was ever kind and gentle, and need we say that to men she was irresistible? Our heroine soon learned to love "Fannie," (who could help it?) and ardently did she desire and strive for her reformation. But in vain—all in vain! Strange to say, Fannie *loved the life she was leading;* she was courted, and flattered, and sought after; and when she compared her brilliant career

with the squalid poverty and the bitter pain that she had endured, as a poor sewing girl, she repined not that she had chosen gay sin in the place of ghastly, shivering, starving virtue. Julia remonstrated, spoke of a future to come, even in this world—a future when beauty would fail; but "Fannie" was like the adder of Scripture, "she would not hear the voice of the charmer, charm it never so wisely," and Julia abandoned the attempt.

But Fannie's "future," of which our heroine spoke, did come (as all "futures" will). One night in winter, as the dark waters of the North River dashed sullenly against the deserted wharves; as the sleet fell, the wind howled, the heavens were black as fate, and the streets were forsaken by even the policemen; as the rich sat in their splendid parlors and "thanked God" (or did *not* thank Him) "that they were not as other men," and the poor crouched shivering by the little fire remaining in their stoves; on this night a female figure was seen (seen by God and the devil, we mean, for there were none else to behold her) to rush hurriedly, desperately along—past the closed stores and the noiseless dwelling-houses, past alike the abodes of luxury and the hovels of misery, past the sleeping city, in fact, until it reached the wharves, the lonely, dismal-looking wharves, and the river, the dark, dismal, cold, roaring, rushing river. Here this female figure stood a moment, shivering with cold, and it may be with fear; bent over the wharf and gazed into the waters, then rushed backwards a pace, then gave a glance of despair upwards to the heavens which frowned upon her, looked around upon the darkness and beyond to the far-off lamps of the city, looked around for the last time. Then, with a sound escaping from her wretched soul through her pallid lips, a sound, part shriek, part curse, and part, let us trust, a prayer, the miserable "Fannie" threw herself into the rushing waters of the deep and ice-cold river.

Yes, it is true, the face was disfigured with small-pox (as those who found her corpse some time afterwards discovered), it is also true, that the body bore the marks of premature decay,

that not a vestige of beauty was left. Nevertheless the corpse was that of the once lovely, caressed, courted, gay, amiable, beautiful "Fannie." The Fannie whom Julia Witherson had vainly endeavored to save.

We doubt not that in Pandemonium the devils held upon this night high carnival over the lost soul that had arrived among them. While in Heaven the angels of God shed tears, over the awful and hopeless death of an "erring sister!"

* * * *

Let us follow Julia Witherson still further in her good, though, oftentimes, fruitless work.

It is a bare, cheerless-looking room. The apartment is of considerable size (for a garret), and is utterly destitute of the slightest sign of comfort. The ceiling is composed of rough boards, and the walls are covered with the cheapest paper, which is as dirty as it is cheap. The floor is bereft of carpet, unless a bit of rag here and there can be called by that name. The furniture consists of a common table (on which lies a brandy bottle and a soiled tumbler), a broken washstand, and the most dismal-looking bed imaginable, covered with scanty and foul linen. The only decorations are an ugly window-screen, which is torn in half, and a low picture supported against the dirty wall by a rusty nail. Such is the room which is situated at the head of a long, narrow, rickety, dark, filthy flight of stairs, and in one of the vilest dens in the city. The window of the apartment looks down upon a little court, from whence an occasional curse is wafted to the unwilling ear; the only pure thing that is to be seen being a bit of blue sky overhead. A close, damp odor is also to be experienced, which is intensely disagreeable. Good God! what a contrast is all this to the sumptuous dwellings of the rich; what a contrast is all this to the delicious sights, sounds and scents of the glorious country!

The occupants of this miserable room at the present hour are two. One is Julia Witherson, trembling inwardly somewhat, and disguised as much as possible, but, nevertheless, unmistakably "the lady;" with her holy purpose lending dignity to her

look and manner. The other is the proprietress of this horrible apartment; a being who was undoubtedly at one time a young woman, but who is now but little more than a prematurely aged and most disgusting remnant of humanity. She is short, stout, ugly, filthy, with a blotched face, teeth nearly black, sunken cheeks, large, hideous mouth, the coarsest possible neck and shoulders, large hands, large, ungainly feet; a figure utterly devoid of grace, and eyes full of rum and villainy. Her dress is as ugly, dirty and coarse as herself; it is nothing but a bundle of rags, which scarcely answer the purposes of decency; in fact, do *not* answer them.

And the life which this woman has for years been leading, and the associations she has kept, have been on a par with her garb and appearance. The dirty lanes and alleys are her world, the night is her day, the low tavern and saloon are her church and Sunday-school, brandy has been her inspiration, and thieves and women as degraded as herself have been her only friends. God have mercy upon her, and the tens of thousands like her!

Julia strives to reclaim her. She uses every argument, every influence that can be brought to bear upon such a wretched, fallen creature. "Leave this place," pleads our heroine, "leave this horrible place. I will send you to a decent and comfortable lodging, and you shall have work that is honest, and will pay you better than the vile life you now lead, and which is killing you fast."

But the woman laughs, and takes a long "pull" at the brandy-bottle. She is evidently bent upon becoming intoxicated, and is succeeding in her design.

"Give me that cursed poison," cries Julia, advancing and seizing the bottle, with the intention of throwing it out of the window. But the woman prevents her, and, laughing again, takes another draught, and empties it.

"Poison—why, that is brandy. My man gave it to me last night. I could not live without brandy."

The case is hopeless. Julia sees that it is so. And she stands in that horrible room with that wretched, drunken crea-

ture (who was once a woman, but who is now a beast), and lifts her eyes upward to the God whom she can behold by faith even through the rough boards that form the ceiling of such a den as this. Her prayer is nearly the same which the Saviour uttered eighteen hundred years ago: "Father, forgive her, for she knows not what she doeth."

But a step is heard upon the stairs. It comes nearer, louder; a drunken man enters; a professional "thief," "the man" of "the woman," who occupies this apartment. He is a coarse, filthy, depraved, utterly vicious being. Julia, at the very sight of him, shudders with disgust, not unmixed with fear, and departs immediately. Yet, strange to say, (and yet why "strange?" nothing *can* be "strange" in woman-nature) this drunken, ugly, lost creature, whose home is this abominable den, *loves* this vile thief. Really loves him, and would steal, murder, beg or die for him; has, in fact, time and again, sold her soul for one smile from his low, vulgar, profane lips.

Reader, you have perused, we presume, the pages of that great novel called "Oliver Twist," and you remember the story of Nancy and Bill Sykes. It is *not* an exaggeration, we assure you.

CHAPTER II.

A PHILOSOPHICAL SINNER.

During her investigations at *salvation*, if we may use the term, our heroine became acquainted with "an unfortunate," whose assumed name was Alice Maltravers. The history of this woman is worthy of some attention.

At the age of nineteen she found herself poor, friendless, alone in the world, and pretty. No, "pretty" is not the term, but intellectual-looking, striking in appearance, not unlike our heroine herself in personal characteristics. She was tall and queenly, and so luxuriant was her form, so superbly rich was its magnificent outline, that those who gazed upon it once would be contented almost to gaze forever. Her features were not of the "regular" order of beauty, and yet there was such an expression of soul pervading them, there was such a charm in the fascination of their eloquent mobility, that many a "belle" would gladly have exchanged places with her. Her eye, too, was superb; a dark, deep, delicious organ, which would have given a poet all the inspiration that he needed. Her hair was long, dark, luxuriant; her hands and feet as fine as human feet and hands could be.

As to her mental powers they were of a higher order than the average. Her education had been limited, but her powers of *observation* (which is more than education) were naturally great, and had been constantly employed. Her peculiar intellectual feature was her fondness for literature. She was a greedy reader, and not only so, she possessed as well aptitude as affection for literary pursuits. Her sphere was imagination, and in all imaginative works she took an intense delight; and she could not only read appreciatingly, but

could also reproduce. As regards her spiritual matters, her religious training had been even more limited than her education. Her creed was certainly not "orthodox," and at the age of nineteen she found herself in the wide world alone, a *woman*, one of that sex which has few opportunities to rise, and many to fall. For a while she sought employment (employment for either hands or head), sought it, as Esau did repentance, "carefully and with tears," but she found it *not*. It seemed as though all avenues of labor or profession were closed against her; that is, all avenues of remunerative labor, labor that would keep her in comfort, that would give her leisure for her mental life, that life of reading, thinking and writing, which was to her a positive need. She could gain work enough to keep her body from starvation, but what of that, the mind has an existence as necessary as that of the body. Men could find work, pleasant and profitable work, work that will occupy and fill the mind, but a woman must either sew in a garret, or starve in a cellar; and in either case her intellect must perish. So at last she formed a resolution—a resolution not adopted in excitement, but based upon (as she deemed) *philosophical* reasoning—a resolution to live comfortably and intellectually in vice, as she could not exist so in virtue—a determination to earn the sufficient "wages of sin" rather than to starve in mind as well as body upon the insufficient rewards of "honest industry." In other words, she had presented to herself, at the age of nineteen, two paths in life—the one the road to integrity, more consonant to her natural goodness, but conducting through sorrow, toil, cold and hunger, watchings, intellectual pauperism, rags and squallor, to consumption and an early grave. The other the path of vice, dishonorable it is true, but then so flowery, leading, through revelling and pleasure, to comparative wealth and intellectual opportunities. Of the two roads she chose the *latter*—chose it on apparently philosophical principles; and, to tell the truth, if there was no other world than this, we could almost admire

her philosophy. She reasoned thus: "If I work as women work, a bare, barren competence is the most that I can hope for. I may not obtain even this, and be driven by necessity to crime at last. At any rate, my nobler powers, my intellectual gifts, will be worthless to myself; I will have neither the means nor the time to indulge them; I must be a mere beast of burden, a human machine, must be scorned by the rich, scorned as though I were, indeed, a sinner. For among the virtuous it *is* a sin to be penniless; whereas, if I *do* "err," I will be scorned no more than were I pure and *poor*. I shall have comfort, and, what is more, have *time*—time to read, study, write and enjoy life, for years at least. Then when my charms desert me, and my lovers depart, why it is a cheap and simple thing to die by poison, the river, or the rope. And death is but an eternal sleep, or if not, no matter; it must be borne, and cannot be avoided."

Thus she reasoned, and upon this reasoning she acted, and was soon provided well for in a neat little house in the western part of the city where our heroine visited her.

The house itself was a very respectable-looking affair, not large, it is true, but very cozy. Everything about the exterior was preserved in a state of scrupulous cleanliness, and the interior was the very picture of comfort. The hall was neatly papered and carpeted; the small parlor was decorated with a fine mirror and several choice pictures, and a piano, of the very best make, added its attractions. Back of the parlor was a comfortable room fitted up for a "library." In short, the whole establishment, including the servant, was "capital." What a change from the garret, which would have been the portion of Alice Maltravers had she been a poor, but *virtuous* woman! Do not censure us for drawing this contrast between the external surroundings of vice and virtue. We but paint truly. But censure, if you will, *society* that permits this contrast.

In this comparatively elegant home Alice enjoyed life, and devoted her leisure time (of which she had an abundance)

to reading, to music, of which she had some knowledge, and to literature, to reading and to writing. Had she not chosen well! Was not this life more delightful, more intellectual, more philosophical, than virtuously sewing for eighteen hours per day for the enormous sum of a few shillings?

Our heroine, who had now become a pretty accurate judge of human nature, soon appreciated the character of Alice Maltravers (who, by-the-by, certainly did *not* resemble the Alice of Bulwer's great novel). And in her attempts at the reformation of Alice, Julia devoted her energies to convincing her new acquaintance of the "error of her ways" by practical arguments, directed to her religion, her philosophy, her literary views, her common sense and worldly knowledge. Alice had become a sinner on philosophical, literary and practical grounds, and on these she must be saved, or on nothing. So Julia, both directly and indirectly, preached and proved the truth of a pure, just and merciful religion; proved the existence of a God, who was at once a Judge and a Redeemer—proved a Heaven and a hell for the good and for the evil; and thus demonstrated that vice and irreligion were great practical mistakes when the next world was taken into consideration.

Julia Witherson also proved, in the most satisfactory way possible, *i. e.*, by practical demonstration, that there were other avenues open to women of *strong* minds, besides sin or starvation. She spoke of the efforts being made in behalf of female labor throughout the Christian world; she showed how thoughtful men and earnest women were daily agitating this matter; and, more than all, she offered a chance of honest and sufficiently remunerative employment to Alice herself.

Julia also encouraged Alice in her literary pursuits; offered to give her increased intellectual facilities, and to use her influence to secure a favorable perusal of the MSS. of her work. For Alice Maltravers, degraded as she was, morally, was yet an authoress; and an authoress, too, of considerable merit. Talent is by no means confined to virtue.

And at last, by all the means mentioned above, and by the

blessing of Heaven upon them, Julia rescued Alice from the paths of error, and brought her in triumph unto virtue.

We need not go into detail. Suffice it to say that Alice Maltravers took a new name, and lead a new and strictly virtuous life. Her days were devoted to fulfilling the duties of a responsible position in an establishment (which Julia's influence had procured her), and her nights were spent in preparing for publication her MSS., which consisted of a sort of diary, worked into the form of a novel of considerable power and originality. Nothing ever transpired of her former life; she became respected; and, at last, to a certain extent, even famous. For Julia, interesting herself in the matter, through her friend, the Rev. George Howard, obtained a publisher for Alice's work, which became "a success," pecuniarily as well as otherwise, and enabled the authoress to live independently of her business position in the establishment above referred to. And in course of time, the once erring "Alice Maltravers" became the well-known literateur, moving in good society, esteemed by all who ever met her.

CHAPTER III.

THE MOTHER AND HER CHILD.

It is late in the afternoon, and in a room in a house situate on a quiet, retired street, two women are conversing; one of whom is evidently a "lady," though disguised in a common garb. In short, it is Julia Witherson.

The room, located upon the ground floor, is not large, but neatly and conveniently furnished. Everything, however, is in disorder; hardly a single piece of furniture is in its proper place, and articles of wearing apparel are scattered in confusion over the apartment. The proprietress is decidedly careless, as she certainly is most decidedly beautiful. For a prettier woman than Julia's companion, at the present moment, it would be difficult to find.

She is tall, and very slender. Her shape is exquisite, and her waist as delicious a sight to see and as delightful a thing to clasp, as any object one could meet with in a year's travel. Her arm, now bare, is white as snow, rounded gloriously, soft and sufficiently plump; a man could wish to be embraced by naught more charming. Her foot and ankle, which peep out from the somewhat scant folds of her dress, are as tiny as they are exquisite. Her bust is most captivating; her neck and shoulders are purer than ivory and ten times more bewitching. Her complexion, spite of the paint with which it is disfigured, could not be improved in its delicate tints of red and white. Her face is so child-like, yet so womanly; so regular, and yet so expressive, that neither painter or poet could desire better study or sweeter subject. Her hair is long, inclined to curl, though worn straight, and is dark but not black. Her forehead is high and unmarred as yet by a wrinkle; her eyebrows long and exquisitely pencilled. Her eyes are not large, and one would be puzzled to tell

their exact color, as their hue seems to vary as often as their expression. Her mouth is not small, not large, but wholly indescribable in its mobility, and altogether delicious in the ripe, red richness of its lips. While her nose, that generally unpoetic feature, in her case but adds an additional charm ; and her chin is beautifully rounded and also dimpled. Altogether, Julia's companion is a lovely creature, far too lovely to be what, alas ! she is. But her story is as old as the everlasting hills, a story that has been told since the creation of the world, and will have to be re-told, we fear, until the end of time. She had been young, innocent, imprudent ; a man had been daring and cunning, specious and heartless ; *he* tempted, and *she* fell ; she trusted, and he betrayed ; he abandoned her, and she became an abandoned woman.

And, alas ! a *drunken* woman also. Oh, reader, if it has never fallen to your lot to see a young and lovely woman, debased, degraded, under the influence of that enemy of human peace which men call wine, thank God for it ; for you have escaped a most horrible spectacle.

And now this lovely but lost being, whom Julia has met, is now visiting, and is endeavoring to save, opens her beautiful lips. What, think you, issues from them ? They are lips made to praise God with and to make a loving man happy—they are lips formed for *kisses*, but alas! alas! they only utter *curses*. Reader, be thankful to Heaven for many things, but be especially grateful if it has fallen to your lot never to hear a lovely, drunken woman *swear !*

Julia looks, listens, and shudders. The blush of shame mantles upon her cheek at this picture of the degradation of her sex. She endeavors to speak words of reproof and of good ; but she sees plainly that now is not the proper season. With a heart full of sorrow, she takes her departure for the present, determined to call and strive again at some fitter opportunity. And the beautiful, lost, drunken, profane Emeline retires to her couch to sleep away the poison within her veins.

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Time passed on, and Julia visited Emeline a number of times. But all her holy and earnest efforts seemed to be in vain. At one time she would appeal to religion—to the fears of an hereafter state, to the terrors of conscience and the fear of death. But Emeline was proof against all these impressions; her soul was seared; she was "joined to her idols." At another time our heroine would dilate to her guilty companion upon the goodness and the mercy of a loving Redeemer, and endeavor to lead the sinner to the shadow of the Cross; but this effort would prove equally vain. On a third occasion Julia would make some practical suggestion of good, or appeal to the common sense and true worldly interest of her companion; but Emeline responded not even to this. And our heroine began to despair. It seemed as though the object of her solicitude was wholly given over by a relentless fate to the powers of darkness; that her certain doom was a life of shame and a death of despair; as though it was written that she should be forever lost.

But one day an unexpected incident performed in an hour the good work of years.

One afternoon Julia determines to pay her last visit to the beautiful Emeline, and accordingly wends her way to the quiet, seemingly respectable street on which the house in which our fair sinner has her room is situated. She is admitted by the servant, an old negro woman, who recognizes in her, as she thinks, a friend of her lodger. The door of the apartment, which, as we before remarked, was located upon the ground floor, is open, and Julia is about entering, when she is arrested upon the threshold by a sight as beautiful as unexpected. Upon the floor, sitting in an attitude of indescribable, inimitable, because utterly unconscious grace; clad in a loosely-fitting robe, which exquisitely displays her charms of person, with her rounded arms, neck, and shoulders, and her delicate feet bare; her hair carelessly curling, and streaming down her back; her face now free from paint, and full of an expression of love and almost innocence; her eyes full of beauty and (a rare thing, alas!) of purity, sits the Emeline she had come to seek. Emeline

no longer with alcoholic poison in her veins and curses upon her lips, but "in her right mind," pressing ceaseless, passionate, yet playful kisses upon the responding lips of a beautiful little child, a girl of some four years of age, who is sitting upon the floor beside her, and in all the innocent glee of childhood, laughing in the midst of her companion's embraces. And Emeline bestows lavishly upon the child many a kiss and clasp which the proudest monarch on earth might envy, calling the child by every endearing epithet. It is a lovely sight, especially when you take into consideration *one* of the parties. Emeline does not now seem what, alas! we know her to be. She looks like a loving, innocent mother, sporting with her lovely and innocent child. And such, all save the innocence on her part, is the relationship between the parties. Emeline *is* the mother of this child, as she herself tells Julia, when she discovers her presence. And this affection for the pure offspring of her guilty love, is the one spark of Heaven still burning amidst the blackness of darkness of the mother's soul. It is the one ray of true womanhood which yet shines amid all degradation. Believe us, reader, there *are* such sparks and rays burning and shining in the depths of even the most polluted woman's soul—if we would but take the trouble, first, to search for them, next to fan them, by our earnest labors, into a holy light of true repentance.

Julia has now her cue. A new opportunity is presented, and she avails herself of her opportunity. She seeks to save the mother by the child. She strives to reach the woman's soul through the mother's heart.

"For your child's sake," pleads our heroine of her companion, "for the sake of that little girl whom you love so truly, be a better woman and a truer mother. As you value that darling little innocent whom you kiss and fondle, for whom you would doubtless die, leave the life you are now leading, and become a mother of whom her child need not hereafter be ashamed."

Emeline listens, and folds her child to her bosom; that child so innocent, so lovely, so loving, who timidly looks with its beau-

tiful eyes—so like its young mother's—at the stranger. And Julia continues:

"Would you have your daughter become hereafter what you yourself now are? No; I see you blush, and shudder, and fold your child more tightly to your breast, as though to shield it from such a fearful possibility. But, I tell you, it is not only a possibility, but a *probability*, aye, an almost *certainty*, unless you yourself become the guardian of your child. For the sake of your little daughter's virtue, and her immortal soul, Emeline, dear Emeline (for you *are* dear to me, and to One above who never made such lovely things as you to perish), become that which you should be, but that which, alas! you are not."

"And which I never *can* be," replied Emeline. "Which I was once before I knew *her* father," pointing to her child, "but which I can never be again." And she presses passionate kisses upon the pure cheek of her child-daughter

"Oh, say not so," rejoins Julia, earnestly, "say not so. It is never too late. Learn of your child. Become pure, as she is—pure in the future, if not in the past. Be as pure as was your own dead mother."

The last sentence was said at a venture, as Julia had learned but little of her companion's history—but it told. It went to her listener's heart.

"If you regard but your daughter's life in *this* world, if you value but her health, her happiness, her comfort, forsake your present career; accept the chance that I have so often offered you, and you so often refused. But there is more in this world than even this life, and you know it—you feel it. Suppose your child were dead now in your arms," (the mother shuddered, and then her lovely eyes filled with tears at the bare thought of such a death), "suppose, I say, your child were but a corpse in your very embrace. It were better so than that she should live to be what her mother has been. Yet she *will* live to become thus worse than dead unless you change your life. For God's sake, for your own sake, for my sake, for your gone mother's sake, and for the more than life of your innocent daughter, your little

daughter there, who looks so wonderingly upon us, have mercy upon yourself—and become what I now ask you to be for the last time."

Agitated by this impassioned appeal, agitated as she has not been for years, her soul full of emotions which have long been strangers, the beautiful Emeline, with a tear glistening in her eye, arises, with her child in her arms, and advancing toward the window, raises partially the curtain. As she does so, a last, long gleam of the afternoon sunlight falls in its beauty upon the mother and the child—the sweet but sinful mother, and the not more sweet, but sinless child. And Julia exclaims:

"See, Emeline, dear Emeline, Heaven smiles upon you—and upon your child. The pure sunlight is upon you. See! your child smiles on you in trust and confidence. Let it not be disappointed. Let the light be in your heart as well as on your head, dear Emeline. Come out of the darkness into the glorious light—for your darling little daughter's sake, dear Emeline."

The "dear Emeline" thus tenderly addressed is not accustomed to tenderness; nor is she accustomed to appeals to her better nature, to her poetry, to her love. Yet there is a fund of goodness, of poetical appreciation, and of true affection, deep down in that woman's heart, which Julia Witherson has discovered, and has reached at last.

And Emeline is saved. Saved through her love for her child—saved through her affections. The same passion which led to her fall has now, in another shape, brought her to repentance.

"Take me," she cries to Julia, "take me, and do with me as you will. None have ever spoken to me as you have done. God bless you. I cannot see my child grow up to be the thing I am. No, not *am*, but *have been*. Take me. I will leave this place whenever it pleases you. I will go wherever you send me. I will do whatever you command me; for, vile as I am, you love me, and have saved me—and *her*, my darling."

And the lovely but no longer lost Emeline falls upon the neck of her delighted redeemer.

CHAPTER IV.

WHAT MUSIC CAN DO

In our last we showed that sometimes even in the breasts of the most degraded women, a spark of true affection may remain, burning when all other moral light has departed; and that by fanning this spark into a flame, the glorious illumination of regeneration may result. It is also true in this connection, that many fine susceptibilities and poetic sensibilities ofttimes exist in the minds of our "erring sisters," latent and unsuspected, but powerful nevertheless, which, if taken advantage of, may be used as instruments of their salvation.

In the course of her experience, our heroine formed the acquaintance of a very dissolute woman, whom she attempted earnestly to bring to a better state, but without any result. And Julia, full of faith as she was in her cause, began to despair.

One afternoon she paid a visit to the person in question. At the moment of our heroine's entrance, the woman was "out," but had left word that she would return in a few minutes, and consequently Julia took possession of the parlor of the house to wait the promised return. And, at last, she took the liberty of opening a piano near her, and of performing upon it, to while away the idle moments. Never, in the course of her whole life, had she felt so disposed for melody. Her fingers rattled over the keys in the most brilliant manner conceivable. But soon her music became less noisy, less rapid, less brilliant, and grew deeper, more plaintive, more expressive in its character. She put more of her soul into her fingers; she infused, as it were, her life-history into her harmony. Now the music was joyous, irregular, like her youthful life in Paris; then it grew for a

while tender, tender as the love she had once borne for Henry Hericot. Then the strain waxed harsh and full of horrible discord, as harsh and horrible as was her life for many months after she had awakened from her delusion of passion. Then the chords grew soft again, and the player's heart was full of pure love and of Charles. Then anon the music again became harsh, but full of firm, noble, grand strains, expressive of the grief, but, at the same time, the nobility which had characterized her separation from her true, poet-lover. And lastly, the melody grew plaintive, yet most sweet, expressive of a holy and a happy hope, a hope to be reunited to the loved one in the coming future.

Julia concluded her wild, strange, original, solitary concert by performing, with wonderful expression, that most charming of melodies, that most delicious of sentimental compositions, that most domestic of all airs; that air which few can heal without a tear or sigh; that air called "Home, sweet Home."

But just as she was striking the final bar; just as her fingers were about to leave the keys, from whose touch she had evoked such melody, a rushing sound broke in upon the music, the rustling of a woman's dress and the heaving of a woman's sob were heard. A female form advanced rapidly to the piano, knelt at our heroine's side, clasped her hands, and cried in a tone of passionate entreaty, "Why, *why* have you played *that*? I cannot bear to hear it now. Please do not, do not play it here again. It made me think so of my old home. Oh, why, why have you reminded me of home, sweet home?"

Our heroine looked around, and saw, kneeling at her feet, her eyes full of tears, a look upon her face which was indescribable in words but replete with spirit-meaning, her whole frame bowed in utter abandonment of soul, the very woman, the godless, careless, hardened woman she had come to seek. This woman had entered while Julia was playing, unobserved, had heard the old, familiar air, had been for a while spell-bound, and then—the reader knows the rest.

Do you ask why this familiar strain, this "Home, sweet

Home," which every school-boy whistles and every school-girl plays, should so affect a creature but little used, by hard experience, "to the melting mood?" We will tell you. As that daughter of sin stood on the threshold of her room, and listened to the strains of "Home, sweet Home," performed with such skill and expression, memory awoke within her breast, as memory had never awoke before. Her mind, and heart, and soul were transported far away, far from this home of her crime to the home of her childhood. She saw in her retrospective vision, the white, irregularly-built, large, comfortable farm-house, in which she had been ushered into life. She saw the barns, "filled with plenty," and the stables, and all those familiar surroundings of the house itself. She saw the ploughed fields, bounded by the distant hills, which were covered with their wealth of timber. She saw the little rivulet, which meandered merrily along, and the dam, and the mill, and the little pond, and the rustic bridge. She saw the village in the distance, with its church-spire, and its neat, pretty dwellings. She saw the porch in which she had been wont to sit, when a little girl, with her sewing during the long summer afternoons. She saw the cozy fireside, round which the family were accustomed to dispose themselves during the winter evenings; the table, and the arm-chair for her grandfather, the clock on the mantel piece, the prints on the wall, the large-figured carpet, and all those thousand and one familiar objects, which are forever associated in one's memory with one's home. Chief of all, she saw her father, with his sun-burnt face and toil-roughened but honest hands; her mother with her gentle smile and her good counsel, her little sister and her noisy brother. And last, she saw herself; not as she is now, careworn, lost, but as she was then, in her girlish days, laughing, singing, skating, bathing, riding, leaping, sewing, reading to her grandfather, "helping" mother, kissing her father, romping with her brother and nursing her sister. Above, beyond, and far more than aught else, she saw herself pure, innocent, beloved. And as she beheld all this in memory, "the old time came o'er her soul," old thoughts, old songs, old coun-

sels, old promises and old blessings were all at once remembered —the tide of overpowering emotion rushed full upon her, and the reader knows the rest.

Julia looked around and saw this woman of many sins, and now of many memories, kneeling and weeping by her side. In a moment she understood all ; and raising the face of her companion, she kissed it tenderly and lovingly, stroked her hair gently, soothed her agitation, and then improved her opportunity. She spoke of past innocence, and of future repentance, virtue and pardon. She spoke of a possible life hereafter of peace, purity and atonement. As Julia thus spoke, her companion listened, and the voice of Heaven was heard within her soul. Bowing her guilty head upon Julia's knees, she cried, "Save me, save me—show me how I can become what you would have me—save me from my past life, save me, save me from my present self; let my future be what you would have it."

A few hours after this scene our heroine was seated in the parlor of her guardian's residence, at her own magnificent piano. But the music which she discoursed was no longer sad or harsh. It was a glorious strain, full of sweet and noble chords, emblematic of the salvation of a soul. And she concluded her performance with magnificent variations of that air which had just produced such magnificent results, the air of "Home, sweet Home."

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CHAPTER V.

CITY LIFE CAUSES CITY SIN.

One of the most difficult cases which Julia Witherson encountered—one of the most insensible of women to improving influences, was a degraded creature by the name of "Bessie." The career of this creature is worth a moment's attention.

"Bessie" was the only daughter of parents who were pretty good people, and her father was, also, "pretty well to do" in the world, in a city mechanic's small way. She was taught her catechism at an early age, was sent to Sunday-school, and went through the usual routine of religious and moral education. But she was naturally prone to idleness, fond of romances, extravagant and showy in dress, three tastes which are readily fostered in city life. Her parents did *not* check to any degree these natural tendencies. The consequence was that at the age of eighteen the young girl was as idle and as romantic a miss as could be found in the city; and withal was as showy in her apparel as any woman whose purse was five times greater than her own. Between ennui, reading (bad French) novels, promenading Broadway, "shopping" and dressing, her time was entirely consumed and altogether wasted. And when her day of trouble came—when her season of trial overtook her ("times of trouble" and "seasons of trial" are as certain as death and taxes)—when her affliction fell upon her, she was totally unprepared to meet it. Sentimental romances, yawning and fine clothes are not the wherewithal to conquer adversity. And so poor Bessie (her mental vision destroyed by the false glitter of city life), whose only idea of poverty was associated with some dark-mustachioed lover, who was ever by his dear one's side, wiping her tears with his elegant handkerchief; poor "Bessie,"

who was incapable of over two hours' continued exertion ; poor "Bessie," who "*must* dress well," to whose very existence nice new bonnets, stylish boots, kid gloves, and fashionable attire for Broadway were essential ; poor "Bessie" took refuge from the blast of sorrow in the bosom of sin, obtained idleness, leisure for novel reading, and plenty of fine clothes at the price of her temporal honor and her eternal soul. All the efforts of Julia to save her were in vain. "Bessie" was lost for ever.

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Ellen O'Connell was, as her name imports, a native of the far-famed, beautiful, but most unfortunate island of Ireland. An island which lays claim to the wit of Swift, the brilliancy of Sheridan, the military genius of Wellington, the eloquence of Curran, and above all, the melody, the grace, the fire, and the bewitching enchantment of Thomas Moore. An island which in its natural capabilities, is equal to most countries, and in beauty is inferior to none. An island whose history abounds in romance and interest ; and yet, an island where the rich are voluntary exiles, squandering their possessions in London and Paris, and where the poor are to be found in the most debasing ignorance, and the most squallid wretchedness. An island, a very large per centage of whose natives are to be found scattered through the length and the breadth of our own land, filling all capacities, from hod-carriers to Brigadier Generals. An island whose people have never had justice done to their many merits, to the honesty, generosity and courage of the men, and the warm-heartedness and general chastity of the women. Suffice it to say, then, that Ellen O'Connell was a native of Ireland, and that her parents were poor but honest people, living upon the lands of a great lord, who, though two-thirds of his income was derived from his possessions in "Green Erin," seldom visited his property, and *never* saw his tenants. As a necessary consequence, the peasantry were bitterly abused and imposed upon by the agents of this lord, and great distress resulted

therefrom. Ellen's brother, a thorough Irishman, wild, impetuous, intemperate, but affectionate and smart, was obliged to leave the country for his participation in a political affair that "turned out" (as somehow *all* Irish politics do "turn out") unfortunately. He went to America and was not heard from for years. In course of time Ellen's parents died, and the poor girl's thoughts turned towards that land whither her darling brother, Terence, had departed. Soon Ellen herself crossed "the sea, the sea, the open sea," and, in a few weeks, was to be found in New York seeking for that most difficult to be obtained of all earthly blessings, a "situation." Now, situations are like policemen, never to be found when wanted. So Ellen O'Connell, at last, despairing of obtaining a place in any other way, surrendered herself to the tender mercies of an "Intelligence office."

These "Intelligence offices" are features of our industrial system, and some of them are deserving of all praise, being the means by which hundreds of young persons, who have neither acquaintance nor money, nothing but their honesty and their willingness to serve, can procure both friends and work. But many of these "offices" in our large cities are simply dens in which advantage is taken of the simplicity and loneliness of the poor women who are compelled to resort to them, and who are thus rendered an unsuspecting prey to the vices of the rich patrons of these bogus establishments. Many a keeper of a fashionable "house of ill-fame" has her agent at the head of a so-called "Intelligence office," who furnishes her with young, fresh, pretty victims. Many a rich *roue* has "an understanding" with the clerk of the office, an understanding by which he can select his lamb from the flock. And it was an "Intelligence office" of this latter class to which the young, unfriended, pretty stranger in our land applied. It was through such a dangerous medium as this that Ellen O'Connell unwittingly sought for a situation.

At her first visit to the Intelligence office, a young, hand-

same, reckless *roue* observed her. He was struck with her beauty; for though her features were not regular, there was such an air of freshness, youth and innocence about her, her complexion, eyes and smile were so fine, her manners so pleasing, that, despite of her brogue and decidedly Irish face, Ellen O'Connell was charming. He whispered to the clerk, and leaving the "office," went to the notorious Madame W. and informed her of his wishes and his plan, promising to pay her liberally if she gratified the one and fulfilled the other. The very next day a rather fine-looking, lady-like woman, past the middle age of life, but "well preserved," visited the Intelligence office, and being pleased with the appearance of Ellen, and satisfied with her replies to certain preliminary questions, "engaged her." Thus, Ellen O'Connell procured a situation. Need we go further into detail? suffice it to say, that ere many days had passed, Ellen ascertained that she was the inmate of an evil house, one of the "establishment." Her first impulse was to escape; but, though this may seem of easy accomplishment to our readers, *she* found it impossible. She was watched and prevented from leaving. And one night, one dark, stormy night, a creature in form of a man, but with the heart of a fiend, the *roue* who had seen her at the Intelligence office, and had set his agents on her track, succeeded in the perpetration of a horrible crime against the peace of an unfortunate woman. There was a shriek, a prayer, a struggle, but those in the house *would* not hear, and the world outside *could* not; for the walls of this peculiar house were of *double* thickness.

And thus, for a momentary and guilty joy, a man deliberately damned, first a woman, and then himself. God have mercy upon us, but we men are sometimes worse than devils.

The fate of Ellen O'Connell is that of many other women. Strategems of the basest, yet most cunning, character are daily employed to ruin unwary girls. And, as a dark blot upon our manhood, it must be recorded that force, brute force, is often used where cunning fails.

And the woman upon whom fraud or force has done its work

not unfrequently becomes desperate under her sense of shame, and then this very desperation goads her on to further crime. She who has been rendered, by necessity, a sinner ofttimes remains a sinner by choice. Thus it was with the once innocent but ill-fated Ellen O'Connell. Our heroine, who accidentally met her, and became acquainted with her history, having in vain endeavored to restore her deadened soul to life, abandoned her in despair. Ellen O'Connell will live and die a victim to woman's perfidy and man's brutality.

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Various other cases, illustrative of various other city causes of vice, encountered our heroine.

The almost numberless temptations of city life produce almost as numberless instances of city sin. The existence men and women lead in large towns, the bogus conventionalities, the seeming restraints but real freedoms, the places we go to, the persons we go with, the times we go at, all these have their evil effects. The houses we live in, the streets we live on, the people we live with, the associations we live amongst, all these have their natural and pernicious results. And our heroine met examples of them all.

One creature she encountered had been ruined by a constant round of theatres (the minor and lower ones), and a ceaseless succession of balls, "social parties," etcetera, with their invariable accompaniments of late suppers, late hours, loose dresses and loose manners.

Another creature who came across our heroine's experience had been destroyed by that fell foe to purity, an overcrowded home or rather *dwelling* not home. This overcrowding of human beings is a fruitful source of the vice of cities, inasmuch as it promotes too great a familiarity between the sexes, and leads to a total extinction of self-respect.

To sum up, in brief, Julia Witherson, during this portion of her career, discovered the full truth of that which we would here concisely impress upon our reader, and which from the caption of this chapter, the truth that city life produces city sin.

CHAPTER VI.

THE NIGHT-CHILDREN OF NEW YORK.

One night (accompanied by her friend, the Rev. George Howard, whom she liked both for his own sake and because he spoke of Charles) Julia started to hear a lecture, by the celebrated and eccentric Henry Ward Beecher. Snow covered the ground ; it was very cold, but our heroine and her clerical companion walked at a rapid pace, and as they were warmly clothed they felt no chill, only a pleasant, healthful glow. In the sky the stars were out in infinite numbers and matchless glory, and it is a glorious thing to walk beneath the stars ! Our couple traversed the city's streets on their way to their destination. They passed the club-houses, the private residences, the theatres, and the hotels, until they had nearly reached their goal. But suddenly Julia encountered a spectacle which arrested her attention, and yet it was a sight not uncommon in our streets.

Three young girls, mere children, were walking together. The eldest could not have been more than fifteen years old, while the youngest seemed scarcely twelve. They were thinly and commonly clad, in garments of various colors, brown, black, red, and blue, like Joseph's coat, though not one tithe so rich or comfortable ; they wore no bonnets on their heads, only a sort of hood of the very cheapest and coarsest material. Two of these girls were ugly, sickly-looking, vulgar, with repulsive features, stamped with the unmistakable, but abominable impress of youthful depravity. Their large eyes stared at the passer-by with a bold, meaning glance ; their movements were as forward as they were ungainly, and ever and anon they laughed a loud, bad laugh and exchanged evil words with those who met them on the street. Such were the two elder girls. But the youngest of the group was as different from her companions as could

be conceived. In comparison with them, she seemed like a sunbeam shining between two foul, dark caverns. She was rather tall for her age, slender and exquisitely formed; her complexion was wonderfully pure, white and delicate, not the pale hue of sickliness, but the snow-likeness of beauty. Her forehead was charming, her chin charming, her neck (of which more was exposed than was fitting in such cold weather, but she had no clothes to cover it) was long, not too long, slender, not too slender; an exquisite throat. Her eyes were beautifully blue, with a frank, open, winning look of childhood in them that was irresistible. Her hair was light in color, almost auburn, and of a luxuriance unusual even in youth. It fell around her in curls, which a princess might envy. Her little feet, which were far too thinly covered to walk the snow-filled streets, were such as Cinderella might have been satisfied with at the age of twelve. She was in short charming in herself, and doubly charming when contrasted with the hideous younglings in whose company she was found. Her companions were evidently as stale in sin as they were fresh in years. Was *she*, could *she* be equally depraved? This question Julia Witherson asked first of herself, and then of her escort, and then stopped for a moment in the street, as though she fain would have asked the question of the child itself. But at that moment there burst forth from the lips of the eldest girl such a profane, disgusting expression that Julia's heart sickened within her. The three girls passed on in one direction, and our heroine and the clergyman departed in the other.

They reached the lecture-room, heard the lecturer, were partly pleased and partly disappointed (as all are who hear the Reverend Beecher), and then departed homewards by the same route by which they had come. The lecture had not consumed over an hour, so that it was still comparatively early. On their way back they encountered the same trio of young girls whom they had met on their way to the lecture. Where they had been during the last hour, with whom they had passed that time, what they had said and done during that period, only God knows. But

here they were now, at half past nine o'clock, on a cold, winter's night, in the streets, with no one to watch over them, clad only in rags and wretchedness. At the junction of two of our principal streets the girls paused, had a moment's converse, and then the two elder ones left their younger companion, the beautiful child of whom we have spoken, and departed, Heaven knows whither. The deserted child looked for a moment after her fast-vanishing companions, and then wended her lonely way in the direction in which our heroine and her escort were advancing. The opportunity was too good a one to be neglected, and so Julia stepped forward to the child, took her by the hand, and said, in that tone of tenderness in which she ever addressed the young and the wretched :

"My little girl, what are you doing in the street so late this cold night—alone—and in such a dress as that? Have you no home—no mother?"

The "little girl" was evidently astonished—probably more astonished than she had ever before been in her brief life. Her blue eyes, naturally large, dilated, and a look of beautiful amazement took entire possession of her face. A grand lady has taken her by the hand, and has asked her a question concerning *her* home and *her* mother—asked her kindly, too ; for a child has a ready instinct that can at once understand *true* kindness. The child is too surprised to answer.

"What is your name, my dear little girl?" continues our heroine. "And where do you live?"

"In C—— Alley," replies the child, who has at last found her tongue, in answer to Julia's last interrogatory. And then, in answer to our heroine's former question, the child continues : "But I have no mother."

The last four words went to Julia's heart. "I have no mother." Before her was a child, beautiful in spite of her rags and vicious companions. A child, in a few years to be a woman, who stood there shivering in the wintry and wicked streets, and told her that she had no mother. And Julia's soul warmed towards his "lost sheep," this poor "babe in the wood." She glanced

again at the thin rags in which the child was clad, noticed the exposed throat, and then our heroine surveyed for a moment her own attire, so ample and comfortable. By a sudden series of movements, she took from her person a scarf, placed it on the neck and shoulders of the little girl, kissed the child, and mur mured, with the kiss, a prayer.

Then she asked the child,—"Are you hungry?"

And the child said,—"Yes, ma'am; I have had nothing but a piece of bread and an apple all day."

Again did Julia kiss the beautiful child. Then leading her into a neighboring "ladies' restaurant," despite of the wonder and the comments of attendants and visitors, the Rev. George Howard and the fashionable Miss Witherson fed and conversed with this ragged outcast.

The little girl was very grateful, though full of wonder and awe at all the fine things she saw, and the fine people she beheld. She seemed like one in a beautiful trance, which she feared might be dissipated in a moment. This night was *the* night of her life. She was eating such delicacies as she had never seen before; she had a nice, warm scarf upon her shoulders; she was talking to a grander lady and gentleman than she had ever met in the whole course of her life, and they were so kind to her, and it was all so strange, and she was so happy. It was all so different from the cold, dirty, wet streets; the cellars—the alley in which she lived; the cold, bare room in which she *tried* to sleep; and the people whom she was in the habit of meeting. It was another world. Her blue eye was a beautiful thing to look upon—it was full of such astonishment and such happiness. And it was a strange sight to see: this fashionable restaurant, with its aproned waiters, its marble tables, its gayly-attired guests; and in the midst of them this little, stray child, with rags on her limbs, yet a fine scarf on her shoulders; wretchedly attired, yet lovely, with her fair skin, frank face, rich, auburn curls, and her delicate hands and feet; an outcast and a beggar—it may be worse—and yet sitting with a well-known clergyman and a respectable lady—talking to them with the innocent confidence of childhood. It

was a strange sight; it was, indeed. Would to God it were *not* quite so strange!

During her meal, her new benefactors obtained from the child a sufficient idea of the life that she (and, alas! thousands of children like her) had led. The subject is too disgusting to be dwelt upon at any length.

But to return to our heroine and to her new charge. The child eat heartily, eat as only those who have felt what hunger is can, and at last was satisfied. It was growing late, and Julia was puzzled what next to do with the child. One thing our heroine was determined upon—she would save this girl. This meeting was not to be a mere incident, a mere episode, and nothing more. It was to be the beginning of a new life for the beautiful child whom she had this night taken from the dark and dangerous streets. She had clothed and fed the body. So far well. But there was much more yet to do—and it should be done. The morals, the soul should be preserved. But how? This was the question which Julia revolved in her mind. One point was settled. The child should not return to her old haunts. According to her own story, her parents, all who had any claim upon the girl, were dead. To go back to her former companions was to be lost. No, she should not return. But where should she then be placed? What should be done with her? Various plans passed in quick succession through our heroine's fertile mind. She consulted with her friend Howard. At last, *the* idea occurred to her. Julia would take the child home with her to her uncle's residence. Mary Barton had laughingly remarked, this very morning, that "a little girl might be of use about the house to serve the servants," and here was the little girl. The child was quick, smart evidently; her evil life had not yet tainted her soul; she would be under Julia's personal care, and could be taught industry and honesty; her uncle and aunt would not object, they were accustomed to her whims and eccentric benevolence; she would prepare a surprise for them The matter was settled.

"Would you like to go home with me, dear, and live with me always?" asked our heroine of the child."

"Do you, too, live up an alley?" inquired the child. Poor, ignorant one—she imagined that all the world resided in an alley, because she did. But then, correcting herself, she continued: "But now, I know, you live in one of those grand houses with big steps to them." And then, as the whole meaning of our heroine's words began to dawn across her mind, she cried: "Live with you, in a nice house all the time, and never be hungry or cold, or go with bad girls any more! Oh, yes; oh, yes—I shall be so glad. It will be so nice, and you are so good, dear, kind lady, and I do love you so." The blue eyes of the speaker filled with tears of joy. And then she laughed merrily—the first really merry laugh of her whole life perhaps. The outcast child was happy.

The two saviours and the saved one left the restaurant together, and taking the wondering, but no longer cold or hungry, wanderer by the hand, Julia reached her uncle's door. The bell was rang, she bid the clergyman "good night," and entered the house, accompanied by the child, who surprised the servant as much as the servant surprised her. Once more the child was all wonder at all she beheld. She had never read Alladin's Lamp story, or the Arabian Nights. She could not read anything; but she felt as one who beheld all these oriental fables realized. Charging the servant to say nothing to Mr. or Mrs. Russell concerning the little stranger, Julia sent for Mary Barton, introduced the child, and told her story, and together they contrived a plan, of which more presently. Julia then conducted the child to a sleeping apartment, undressed her, that is to say took off her rags, and told her to say her prayers. The child evidently did not understand her; she opened her blue eyes wide, shook her fair curls, and asked, simply, "Prayers—what are prayers?"

Yes, reader, despite of our Sunday-schools, our churches, our priests; despite of our foreign missions, which are designed to benefit heathens thousands of miles distant; despite of our

abolitionists, who love the negro so intensely ; despite of all these, there are very many white children in our very midst, who, like this little child, have not the slightest idea of what a prayer is.

Shocked, yet not surprised, for Julia's experience had taught her many things, our heroine explained her meaning, and kneeling down, the little girl of the alley and the dark streets offered up to Heaven her first petition. Julia then put her charge into the first decent bed she had ever slept in, bade her "good night," and was departing when she heard a noise behind her. Turning round, she saw the little girl had risen and advanced towards her timidly, affectionately, and sweetly ; looking in her white, fresh night-dress most deliciously cherub-like ; the most beautiful tint of a flush upon her usually pale cheeks, her exquisitely delicate feet bare, her throat gleaming even whiter than her night-robe ; her mouth, with its tiny, rosy lips, extended temptingly upwards, as if beseeching for an embrace. And as Julia gazed the child said, in the most delightful, affectionate tone imaginable : "Dear, kind lady, won't you kiss me and be my mother ?"

Then Julia bent her queenly form, and softly kissed the lips that were so temptingly upraised, and recorded a mental vow to be indeed a mother to this darling—a mother to this child, rescued providentially from foul street corners, damnable "saloons," and hidden places of iniquity ; from cold, hunger, rags, cruelty, indifference, temptation, lust, theft, profanity, devilish companions, idleness, ignorance, vice, and ruin—this child restored to decency, comfort, warmth, food, kindness, honesty, industry, and a chance for life and virtue. With this kiss and this vow Julia retired to rest. And we do mean to say, reader, and we here say it, that Julia Witherson, by clothing, feeding, and bringing home this child to-night, did a better deed than if she had given twenty thousand dollars to the Anti-Slavery Society, or to the Society for Foreign Missions.

That night the child dreamt of many wonderful things—but

all of them so pleasant. Good angels appeared to her, and all the angels looked like the dear, kind lady who had kissed her and was going to be her mother. That night, too, Julia Witherson had a strange vision. First, a foul, dark, evil spirit with the look of an accuser, stood before her and pointed to a back ground on which were depicted the follies and the sin of her early life. The mysteries of Paris were painted there, and the figure of Henry Hericot, esq., stood prominent. And the voice of the spirit cried, "Behold thy former life—thou art mine. Proud skeptic, aye, sinner, thou art mine. Behold the home that is prepared for thee." And with his hand he pointed downwards, where a red, lurid light was visible. Then Julia shuddered in her dream. But now another and a bright, loving spirit appeared, full of light, with an eye of Faith, a face of Hope, and a smile of Charity. And this spirit addressed the other and the darker one. "Hold! Thou hast no power over her. She is a forgiven one—for she has loved and saved others." Then this second spirit waved his hand, and Paris, Hericot and their accompaniments vanished. And in their place were to be seen the figures of women who advanced to Julia and cried, "She has saved us—she has saved us." Then these, too, passed away, and a little child, a child the very image of the little girl of the streets, who had this very night been rescued from them, was seen in their stead. The child smiled sweetly, stretched out its lovely arms, shook its auburn curls, and cried, "She is my mother." Then the good, bright spirit raised his hand and pointed upwards—the darker spirit vanished—and Julia awoke. It was but a dream.

But visions often bring in their train comfort—real comfort, and this dream brought consolation ineffable to the dreamer.

During the subsequent day Julia and Mary Barton, in pursuance of a little strategem previously arranged, kept the little girl from the sight of Mrs. Russel until they had procured her completely new and becoming attire. Julia then presented the child to her aunt, who was delighted with her appearance, and

agreed to Julia's plans in regard to her. The child was soon taught her line of duties, which she discharged with industry, neatness and skill. She is now growing up under Julia's eye and care, is always most respectful, most loving and most grateful to her benefactress, and is virtuous and happy. She is a saved woman; saved temporarily and spiritually, and she owes her salvation to the night in which she first met Julia Witherson.

There will be one wretched woman the less on our streets and in our prisons. There will be one happy wife and mother the more in our hearts and homes. One victim the less for Satan—one soul the more for God.

CHAPTER VII.

CONCLUDED.

The phases of vice are infinite in number and variety; and the experiences of our heroine among our "erring sisters" would fill a volume. But we have had enough of this subject, and we would now briefly glance at a few "last" cases of "sin" encountered by Julia Witherson.

Our heroine was brought into contact with a family, consisting of an old mother and three daughters, and illustrating a horrible truth, viz., that parents are often *directly* accessory and responsible for the vice of their children, forcing or tempting their own offspring to perdition for a *pecuniary* consideration. The mother in question had systematically undermined the principles of her daughters, till each of them had devoted herself to a life of evil, and then this diabolical women had shared in the gains of their iniquity; the four now living in a comfortable house in a manner worthy of Satan. And yet mothers like this devil abound in New York and London.

Our heroine also met with a reckless woman, a Catherine Crawford, who serves as an example of yet another terrible fact, at which we can barely hint; the fact being that not a few women are so physically constituted, and so mentally depraved, that they become evil by choice, and surrender themselves *voluntarily* to their passions. God have mercy upon them, for these cases are beyond all human aid.

Another sinner came under our heroine's notice — a sinner made so, simply and solely by her early fashionable life. This woman was of a wealthy and distinguished family, resident in a Southern State. She had been in the habit of passing part of her time with her New York friends among the upper ten thousand. She traced her ruin to no

one particular cause ; she had encountered no special temptation ; but her morals were sapped by a course of frivolities, until at last she strayed ; and then the fashion which had destroyed immediately deserted her.

Another case we shall mention was that of an unfortunate by the name of Jane Kenton, whose history was alike peculiar and interesting. The life of this creature proves the oft uttered dictum that the basest vices may sometimes, though rarely, spring from an exaggeration of the noblest virtues. Jane was left at an early age a poor orpan, with the care of an invalid and blind brother, utterly unable to support himself. The brother was of a literary turn of mind ; poetry was his passion; and to gratify this second nature of his, Jane Kenton violated her own. She debased herself in vice to obtain the money with which to publish a volume of her brother's poetical productions, being otherwise unable to accomplish this object. She, also, still further pursued a career of shame to procure the means to command medical treatment for her brother's blindness. But the last venture proved fruitless. The brother died ere his 22d year, and the sister soon followed him to another world. Spite of our heroine's exertions, Jane perished a sinner, and by her own hand. She was a Cyprian and a suicide. But who of us shall dare condemn her?

Cases like this are, however, very rare, rare almost as Christian charity or true Christianity.

Julia Witherson also encountered in her career poor lost women, who had been as it were "permitted into perdition" by the culpable carelessness of their so-called mothers—parents who perhaps loved, in their way, their children, but by their heedlessness of the sacred maternal obligation, had indirectly yet really led their own flesh and blood to destruction.

And cases yet more sad and more disgraceful perhaps to human nature were met by our heroine, in the persons of young women who were compelled to sin in order to subsist ; young women who had endeavored to obtain, and in vain, small wages in a large city ; young women who were absolutely forced by

society into shame—such instances are only too common—and call aloud to God for vengeance.

Julia also, in her experiences among the fallen of her sex, learned that, even midst all the foulness of impurity, love may, true love does exist; love in the breasts of degraded creatures for their false "lovers;" love that, exhibited in a higher grade of human life, would command the admiration of a world, and which, even as it is, demands the loving pity of a God.

Julia likewise was taught a practical observation, that the way of the transgressor is indeed hard. As she stood by the bed of the dying, and (by the all save herself) deserted cyprian; as she listened to the groans, the curses, the shrieks and the godless despair of the sinful sufferer, as she bent over and closed the terrible eyes of the lost woman, whose soul was with its Maker; she silently but solemnly repeated the prayer uttered thousands of years ago, but as applicable now as then—"Let me die the death of the righteous."

Our heroine likewise indirectly, in the course of her adventures, enjoyed occasionally the inestimable privilege of being able to assist the wants and alleviate the wretchedness of the virtuous poor of the working women of the metropolis who are striving day and night against those two horrible enemies, starvation and sin. This class of women is at once the most numerous, the most deserving, and the least thought of; but there is an old and true saying, that prevention is better than cure.

Thus far we have treated of our theme by way of a continued story, or separate sketches. We have illustrated by example various phases of sin, and described various specimens of sinners. We have accompanied our heroine through many scenes, and have witnessed her successes and her failures.

We now propose awhile to abandon the role of the Romancer, and assume that of the Thinker. We give warning "to all whom it may concern" that our Book Fourth is wholly a Book of Thought. Let us trust it will prove none the less interesting on that account.

BOOK THE FOURTH.

A BOOK OF THOUGHTS.

CHAPTER I.

A CHAPTER ON CAUSES.

In the body of this volume we have illustrated, in a more or less direct manner, many of the evils and mistakes which lead to immorality. But it would be impossible, within reasonable compass, to give examples of *all* the causes of vice. We will merely in this place enumerate the chief of these causes, whether previously referred to or not ; we will sum them up, commending them to the reader's own private and serious reflections.

A false philosophy, a mistaken view of love and marriage, occasionally leads women to perdition, *among the higher classes.* Our heroine has been described as an illustration of this fact.

A false philosophy of a different character, a mistaken idea of the value of *money* as compared with a pure conscience, deceives many, as in the case of our Alice Maltravers.

The dangers of city life are another prolific source of sin. So are the "popular" amusements of our great centres of life ; our concert saloons, our dancing halls, our public balls, and *at least one-half* of our theatres, as at present conducted.

The strategems employed by "men about town" to deceive and betray young women ; the "decoy agents" employed by the proprietresses of evil establishments ; the fictitious "intelligence offices," and the so-styled "restaurants ;" and last and most shameful of all, the facilities afforded for the successful use of brutal *force*, render our modern cities truly dangerous to virtue.

The neglect of children by their parents, especially by their

mothers, the permitting sons and daughters to live unwatched, is a prolific source of evil. Ill-assorted marriages are also to be numbered among the causes of vice : the partners seeking abroad that happiness which is denied them at home. The unrestrained intimacies between the sexes which is a characteristic of American social life is likewise another provocative of social vice.

The customs of fashionable life among us are unfavorable to virtue ; the shadow of decorum is preserved at the expense of reality. Men neglect their wives and devote themselves to the wives of their neighbors, their neighbors returning the compliment, while unmarried men are far too attentive to married women.

The ignorance of physiology which prevails, despite our so-called civilization, in our midst, is a more prominent cause of evil than the unthinking imagine. Ignorance is *not* always bliss, it is not *always* folly to be wise. There also are various *physical* causes of sin known solely to the physician. Error is often the consequence of a disordered *material* organization.

Error often results likewise from a diseased *moral* system—from a misapplication of noble qualities. As in the case of Jane Kenton, who was led to impurity by the exaggeration of a pure love for her helpless brother.

Natural and almost unconquerable passions lead not a few to sin ; passions which are strengthened by *surfeit* and *intemperance*.

Overcrowded dwellings, the tenement-house system, the herding together of the sexes, and the like features of *poor life* in our great cities, as likewise among the middle classes the *boarding-house system*, destroy the honor of thousands of females annually.

Bad men and bad women, profligate or mercenary fathers and mothers, add *their* misery and vice to the great aggregate.

The three *prime* causes of evil are *Dress*, *Seduction*, *Poverty*.

The former slays its hundreds of souls, the second its thousands, and the last its tens of thousands. The cure for the first is economy, and good taste, and education ; for the second, improved public sentiment and parental watchfulness ; and for the last, true philanthropy, true notions of the "public interest" and of "woman's sphere," and truly Christian charity.

CHAPTER II.

A CHAPTER OF FACTS.

Did a pure being of another sphere visit this world of ours, he would refuse to believe that there existed in our midst human beings who sold themselves, body and soul, to iniquity, to disgrace in this life and ruin in the life to come, for a few dresses, a few dinners, or a few dollars. But he would be *forced* to believe, at last. Still the pure being would solace himself with the reflection that at least these vile creatures were discountenanced by all who were of any elevation or importance. But, alas! even in this supposition he would be mistaken; immorality not only exists but flourishes, by the patronage of those who have patronage to bestow.

Low vice is not confined to the low, but is supported by men that are high—high in position, standing and prestige; lawyers, physicians, merchants, editors, authors, inventors, politicians, orators, fast young men of fashion, and refined old men of leisure, all these contribute their quota to the continuance of vice and immorality in our midst.

The temples of female sin—the palaces of womanly iniquity—which abound in our fashionable streets, and which are almost as well known and as well attended as our churches, could not retain their peculiar position a week, without the liberal custom of the rich and great—generally the rich and great who have wives and children, or at least sisters and sweethearts.

Houses of evil, however, are not *all* elegant and refined; they are of many grades, and include not only the magnificent maison de joie and the quiet house of appointment; but the middle-class house, where they advertise "board for the lady only;" many "hotels on the European plan," the inmates of

which are chiefly women; most of the "private supper-rooms," and many "restaurants" and "cellars," which are indeed "dark places of iniquity;" hundreds of low and dirty haunts, frequented by the Magdalenes of our nightly streets; and then the nasty, horrible, abominable dens, "panel-houses" and earthly "hells," inhabited in common by cyprians, thieves, and, God help us, children.

"Erring women" likewise are not *all* "stylish" and fashionable "ladies" in the usual acceptation of the term, but embrace numerous and gradually inferior varieties, not only the favorites of our wealthy citizens, and the inmates of leading establishments, but the members of "the floating population" of "hotels" and "boarding houses," many so-called "shop-girls" and the dwellers in "second-class" establishments, along with the sad army of the street-walkers, the saloon-girls and the Nancy Sykeses of the metropolis.

In the great majority of cases immorality dwells in vulgar and repulsive haunts, and is represented (to an educated taste at least) by vulgar and repulsive people.

Carelessness, recklessness, proneness ofttimes to gambling, profanity or intoxication, extravagance in dress, in expenditure and in so-called "amusement," and a certain coarseness and general heartlessness, mark each and every variety of "erring women."

You can see them on the Park, at a fashionable bathing-place, or at the springs; at theatres, balls, and on Broadway; you can also see them in hospitals, in prisons, and on dissecting-tables; you will finally see them one day trembling before the bar of their God-Judge.

And you will always see them making money and wasting it; reaping in their summer-time of prosperity vast sums, and yet in their winter-time utterly in want.

The sums of money obtained by female vice are immense, far beyond the average computation—full enough to build new hospitals, libraries, churches and workshops yearly; but the sums squandered by female vice are more immense still—more immense than aught save the EVILS that arise from vice.

These evils are six in number, and comprise the temptations to

theft and murder which accompany immorality, disease, illegitimacy of offspring, loss of reputation, wear and tear of the nerves, and feelings incident to illicit intimacies and the tragedies which daily result therefrom.

And yet—amazing but most true—these evils are not only allowed to exist, but their very existence is ignored. And this ignoring of vice is perhaps a worse evil than vice itself.

Let us not vainly strive to conceal, but rationally strive to cure it.

By every consideration that can affect or influence the person or the people; by the duty of economy and sense in the expenditure of our money; by the hope to improve the condition of our community, to lessen the number of its nuisances, its dangers and its criminals; by the peace of our homes, the sanctity of our domestic altars; for the sake of the temporal and eternal safety of our wives, daughters, sisters and loved ones; by our own desires for health and happiness; for the sake of morality and for the love of God, let us all, who read this book, strive to lessen the evil upon which it is written.

CHAPTER III.

A CHAPTER ON TREATMENT AND CURE.

It does not suffice to describe an evil in its more dramatic aspects. Those who thus paint the evil should also be able to point out means, *if not for its cure, at least for its amelioration.* Allow us, then, dear reader, a few words on the treatment and cure of vice, a most important point; a *vitally* important one, though divers and sundry of our sickly sentimentalists dismiss it with the stereotyped finality that it is a "delicate topic." We repeat that it is no less an important one, and though we shall handle it as "delicately" as possible, we shall also treat it boldly and truthfully.

The Law and the Church have, at various times and in various places, attempted the impossible feat of *total suppression* of vice, and have only succeeded in proving the attempt an absurdity. But, though perfect virtue is impossible till the millennium, *very* much can be done in the way of modifying and ameliorating evil, depriving it of some of its most appalling attendant circumstances, and greatly reducing the number of its more immediate victims.

The means by which these desirable objects may be accomplished are five in number:

1st.—The Removal of the Causes of Vice.

2nd.—Legal Enactments.

3d.—Early and Prudent Marriages.

4th.—The Active and Direct Influence of Good Women, and

5th.—The Improving and Elevating of the Moral Tone of Society.

Let us consider these means separately, in the order in which we have enumerated them.

1st. *The Removal of the Causes of Vice.*—This means of cure can be but barely stated, as its full consideration would require a volume. We have in the first chapter of the present book enumerated the majority of the causes of error. If the reader will but consider each of these thoughtfully in his own mind, his good sense will suggest the best method of its abolition.

2nd. *Legal Enactments.*—The law certainly should take cognizance of this great and widely-spread evil.

In Paris a most excellent system of legislation prevails upon this subject, and the law is as thoroughly enforced as it is admirably conceived. It would be an immense gain to our country if we "moral" Americans would but adopt both the theory and the practice, on this subject, of those Parisians who are so often and so flippantly called "immoral." But this branch of the subject hardly admits of being treated of in a work of this kind. We refer the thoughtful and inquiring among our readers, for full information on this point, to other sources.

3d. *Early and Prudent Marriages.*—This term may seem contradictory. Many will say that an *early* cannot be a *prudent* marriage; but the many are mistaken. The earlier a man weds for *love*, and having wedded, *works* for his wife and family, the better for him, for his family, for society, and for morality. His natural passion is hereby gratified and his noble ambition is hereby stimulated. Were wedlock more common, vice would be *uncommon*.

4th, and most important. *The Action and Direct Influence of Virtuous Women.*—Our heroine, Julia Witherson (who, spite of her early error, fully deserves to be classed among "virtuous women"), is an illustration of how much good can be accomplished by this agency. But (as we are now departing for a while from our sphere of novelist, and are adopting the character of a writer who writes in all seriousness upon a most serious subject), we will grant that our heroine's adventures are somewhat imaginary; still women *have* had a real existence who have approached closely to our heroine's example. Women *have* existed who have endeavored to

reform even Cyprians—Mrs. Fry, for instance,—aye, and *succeeded* in their endeavors, too. And even supposing that hitherto no woman had ever made an attempt of this kind—what then? Does it follow that no attempt shall *ever* be made? By no means.

We do not mean that, as society is at present constituted, it would be practicable or advisable for respectable females to disguise themselves, as our heroine did, and, like her, visit the haunts of infamy. Our heroine was, in many respects, a most remarkable woman, remarkable both in her history and her character, and she did some remarkable things. We have recorded and described her character, history, views and actions, *not* as a specimen of average female existence and duty, *not* as an everyday specimen of womankind, but merely as a fictitious, perhaps exaggerated illustration of two great truths; which truths are—*first*, that an erring woman can reform; *second*, that one woman can, if she chooses, bring about the reformation of many others.

But, farther than this, we certainly *do* think that the general example set by Julia Witherson in relation to the erring of her own sex could (to a certain degree, and to a much *larger* degree than has ever as yet been attempted,) be followed to much advantage by virtuous women generally. If married women of position, influence, and true Christianity would but bestow as much time, and care, and labor, and sympathy, and advice, and aid upon the *vicious* of their own sex as they do upon the merely *unfortunate*, vaster results would be accomplished for the cause of morality than has as yet been even imagined. If married women of position and influence would but descend from their high places of indignation, and would think it no more disgrace (as it really *is* not) to visit and relieve personally a sinner than it is to visit and relieve a sufferer, morality would be much the gainer. Magdalene Societies and Rosine Associations are all very well in their way, but theirs is a very small way. One of the great obstacles which at present exist to the reformation of women is their knowledge that *their own sex* despise them more and treat

them more cruelly than the male sex ; that they have absolutely more to fear from virtuous women than from worldly men.

But we are certain that were it once seen and known that virtuous females took a certain degree of interest in, and felt a certain degree of sympathy for, the poor sinners of their own sex ; if the spotless did but visit personally the stained and polluted, speak kindly to them, and give them, like the Saviour, a chance to "go and sin no more," then, indeed, would the ranks of the female army of sorrow and sin be materially and most gloriously diminished ; then, indeed, would there be "joy in heaven over (many) a sinner that repenteth."

But there is yet a fifth means towards ameliorating, restraining and modifying immorality. This last lies in purifying and elevating the general moral tone of society.

For after all, society is, to a large extent, directly responsible for the social evil. Were the men, women, books, amusements and customs of the upper classes really chaste ; did the high but take an interest in the low ; did the virtuous severely frown upon the vicious, then would evil almost disappear ; but as the opposite of all this is the case, things are as they are.

But let us briefly define what we mean by "the purifying and elevating of the general moral tone of society."

First, we mean that our "best society" should be indeed our "best," and not our worst. That female dress should become more decent, conversation less salacious and suggestive, fashionable literature less frivolous and less foul, parents more watchful, children more obedient, and the relations between the sexes more restricted.

Second, we mean that the pulpit, which is an important social agency, should be much more honest, frank, fearless, direct and practical than it has ever yet been.

Third, we mean that there should be more communication and interchange of thought, feeling and interest between the upper and lower classes.

Especially would we have two facts to be fully impressed upon the public mind—that the reformation of criminals, whether

male or female, is possible; and that the male criminal should be condemned and punished, at least to an equal extent with the female.

We must add, in conclusion, that we both conscientiously and reasonably believe that, if the various methods that, in the present chapter, we have suggested for the lessening of vice, and the amelioration of its attendant evils, be adopted; (if wise and scientific "legal enactments" be devised and enforced; if men and women marry early and prudently; if women will give their active, and direct influence to the cause of the salvation of their fallen sisters, and if the general moral tone of society be refined and elevated by the means which we have mentioned,) then the great evil, the mortal sin, which now so frightfully prevails, and of which, in this book, we have so especially and conscientiously, though scrupulously treated, will (if not cease to exist), at least, cease to offend our readers and the public by its at once insulting and demoralizing *ostentation of the abominable.*

BOOK THE FIFTH.

NOBILITY ON TRIAL.

CHAPTER I.

HOW "UNCLE SHINE" FORGOT TO KEEP SEVERAL BUSINESS ENGAGEMENTS.

We will now resume the direct thread of our narrative, and continue to the end without further digression. One morning Mr. George H. Shiner arose at an early hour. The day was dull and dreary, but Mr. Shiner was a good judge of the weather, and, as he looked out of his window, he said, to himself,—"It will not rain." And this fact was of considerable importance, for he had various matters to attend to to-day.

So he dressed himself in the same dirty, common, queer old suit, as usual. He then devoted a few moments to overlooking his model machine. It was now completed, and this very day he intended to exhibit it to a committee of manufacturers. After seeing that the machine was in perfect order, he turned his attention to his piano, which he found needed tuning. So he drew out his note-book and made a memorandum of the fact, so that he might be reminded when "down town" to send up a skillful tuner. He then went to one of the drawers of his bureau and took from it a MSS. which he carefully read over. It was an essay written to prove that there was no such a thing as a Providence, in the usual religious acceptation of that term, and was intended to be read before an Infidel society, of which Mr.

Shiner was Chairman. The MSS. was written in a horrible handwriting, worse than that of authors generally, if possible; but the style was of considerable merit, and the arguments were of much specious power.

Being satisfied with the MSS., the old man laid it back, and was about to leave the room and go down stairs, when a whim seized him. He turned, and advanced to the corner of the room in which he kept his safe, opened it, and looking among the papers which it contained, found his "last will and testament"—his second will, the will which he had drawn up shortly after his strange musical encounter with Julia Witherson, and seizing this paper he placed it in the breast-pocket of his coat. *Why* he did so, he would himself have been puzzled to explain. We, all of us, do many things every day for which we can give no reason. But *so* he did. He then locked up the safe, and, putting the key in his pocket, left the room.

He found most of the family seated at the breakfast-table, and taking his place among them, partook of, for him, a very hearty meal, and was even more brilliantly bitter and sarcastic in his remarks than usual, and conversed much more freely. After breakfast, leaving word that he would return at two o'clock, and that shortly after that hour a cart would be at the door to convey his model-machine to his office down town, he left the house. But, as he was descending the front steps, he stumbled, and, falling, would certainly have been precipitated against the pavement with a shock sufficient to have killed him had not a passer-by caught him in his arms. With muttered thanks and an uttered curse the old man received his new lease of life, and then hastily wended his way along the streets toward the business portion of the city.

Now, it strikes us, that had there been no Providence—as Mr. Shiner says in his Essay there is not—the old man's fall just now would have been fatal, and he would never have reached "the business portion of the city." Take heed, take heed, old man—beware, old Uncle Shine, the Providence which thus far has protected you may some day cease to do so.

On reaching the city, Mr. Shiner paid a series of hasty visits to the offices of various manufacturing companies, and reminded the gentlemen he found there of their engagement to be at his office at half past three o'clock that afternoon, to witness the working of the machine which he wished to introduce to their notice. At all the places where he called, Mr. Shiner, spite of his worthless clothes, odd manners, and slovenly appearance, was received with the utmost politeness and respect. For he was known to be very rich ; and, therefore, he had a right to be just as slovenly and odd as he chose to be.

He then called at the office of his special agent, and gave him peremptory orders to sell at once, for what they would bring in the market, various stocks, etc., which had been given him as collateral for loans which he had made to certain parties—and which had been for some time due and unpaid. True, he had a legal right to do this, but (as he was not in want of money, and as by forcing these stocks now on a depressed market they would be sacrificed ; whereas if he waited awhile the market would rise, and something could be realized on these stocks not only for himself, but for their original owners,) it would certainly have been his duty, as a man to his fellow-men, to have waited a while longer before proceeding to extremities. But George H. Shiner had never been known to do a single generous action in the whole course of his life ; certainly not where money matters were concerned. So he gave his agent his orders, and his agent had no option but to obey him.

"At half-past four this afternoon I shall call for the money." So saying, Mr. Shiner took his departure.

The next place the old man visited was the store of Mr. A——, a leading merchant, and, at the same time, a prominent Infidel, a member of the society of which Mr. Shiner was Chairman. The two sceptics conversed for some time on matters of business ; and then, Mr. A—— informed his visitor that on that very afternoon, at five o'clock, there would be a special meeting of "the Society of Free-Thinkers."

"Ah! I am glad of that," said Shiner, "as I have written an Essay I would be delighted to read before the Society."

"We would be most delighted to hear it," replied Mr. A——.

"I will bring the MSS. with me this afternoon. It is at my sister's, but I will get it at dinner time, and will read it this afternoon. It is not long."

Shortly afterwards Mr. Shiner left, and, as he had at last gradually advanced into the neighborhood of his own office, he entered the large, well-furnished room which bore his name inscribed conspicuously on a plate outside; and, seating himself by the table, read and answered one or two letters which he found waiting for him. We have styled Mr. Shiner's office "a well-furnished room;" so it was—everything about it was fitted in the best style. Still, we repeat, Mr. Shiner himself was a miser, a lover of money for money's sake; but he had lived long enough to know that show is necessary sometimes to secure substance; though he begrudged a cent where it was unnecessary, he would spend hundreds of dollars where it would *pay* him well to do so; he thought it would pay to have a showy-looking office, and consequently he had one. This is his own private office, and has nothing to do with Shiner & Kincarde's Factory, which is at some distance, and where Mr. Kincarde is to be found.

Having attended to his correspondence, Mr. Shiner glanced over the papers, received several business calls, and then, leaving directions with his clerk, departed to call at various banks and other business resorts. His mind was as active to-day as it ever was in early manhood; he was as keen, worldly, success-deserving, heartless, and Godless now as at the age of twenty-one.

At half past twelve o'clock Mr. Shiner returned to his office, and, telling his clerk that he would be back at three o'clock, left, to pay a visit of inspection to some houses that he was having built in the lower part of the city. As we have before remarked, Mr. Shiner was, for his age, very active, so he determined to walk rather than ride to his present destination. The day

was gloomy—but did not seem likely to prove rainy—and our old sinner made good time. As he walked along, passing the entrance of a court, a group of children, full of noisy mirth, brushed against him ; and, strangely enough, thoughts of his own childhood, reminiscences of the days of his own youth among the hills of New England, rushed to his mind as they had not rushed for years, and made him, old and hardened as he was, feel as though he were a boy again. Wonderful ! wonderful ! Surely some crisis of his life must be approaching when such a man experiences such feelings. But they do not last long—"Shiner is himself again !"

Shortly after this, on his way towards his houses, a specimen of ragged humanity, called "a beggar woman," meets him, and asks of him "charity, in God's name." "Charity" of a man who has never given one dollar away benevolently for over seventy years ! "In God's name," too, when the person she addresses has never been able to decide, in his own mind, whether there be such a Being ! Of course she obtains nothing—but being persistent in her supplications, the old man raises his cane, as if to strike her. And then she curses him. "May you die soon, and may the devil take you." Such was her precious prayer. "Die soon," muttered the old man. "Fool ! I am good for ten years yet. And as to the 'devil,' if there is one, why then he may 'take me.'" And he thinks no more of the beggar woman or her curse.

But he remembers his piano needs tuning, and that a tuner lives near. So he calls upon the man who exists by repairing the injuries of musical instruments, and, giving the residence, desires him to call at seven this evening, when he will be ready to receive him ; for no one shall touch his favorite piano saving in his own presence. He then proceeds on his way. He sees a crowd a little beyond him, a crowd who are gathered round the door of a house. He understands the reason at a glance. A hearse stands in the street. Some one is being taken to his long, last home. He inquires, who is dead ? They tell him, an old man. Moved by a strange impulse he asks, "How old was

fie?" "Seventy-one years," is the reply—just his own age Singular coincidence! How does he know that he "is good for ten years yet" of life?

At any rate, here he is now at his houses. They occupy a portion of an open lot, and stand a little back from the street. They are only partially advanced towards completion; are as yet only in what may be called a skeleton condition. There have been no workmen employed upon them recently—but he intends putting a gang of men at work next week. He has visited them to-day merely to see how they look, and to decide as to whether he will erect some more houses on this lot (which he owns), or not; partly, too, for the walk; partly, too, because it was a whim. He has been quite whimsical to-day.

Having examined the buildings from the outside, he enters them. He also (partly to inspect the houses more thoroughly, partly to obtain a view of the neighborhood, and partly again from a mere whim) ascends by means of a ladder to the upper stories. As the lot on which the houses stand is somewhat elevated, he has a good view of the vicinity. And as he looks upon the crowded blocks, his breast expands with pride as the thought occurs to him that he has money enough to buy them all.

* * * * * * *

Time passes on. It is two o'clock. But Mr. Shiner has not returned home—lunch waits for him (he always lunches at home); Mrs. Kincarde wishes to see him, so does her husband; but he has not come. A quarter past two, and the cart has arrived to convey his model machine to his office, according to instructions. He is generally a prompt, punctual man; but probably he has been detained by business. He sometimes *is* detained half an hour or so beyond his time. A quarter to three; still he has not arrived. Mr. Kincarde is obliged to be at the factory by three o'clock, so, having taken his lunch, he departs. Eliza exclaims, "Why, what on earth can keep old uncle Shine?" And her mother replies, "Why, really, I cannot imagine." But a step is heard in the hall. "Ah, that is he,"

they both exclaim together. It is a man, certainly—but not the man they expect. It is the man who came with the cart, and who now comes to tell them that, being tired of waiting, he guesses he will go away, as it is after three o'clock, and he can get another and a better job elsewhere in a few minutes. So he drives off, and again Eliza Kincarde exclaims, "Why, what on earth can keep old Uncle Shine?"

His model machine waits for him in his room. There, too, is the MSS. essay, which proves that there is no such a thing as a Providence. There, too, is Tom Paine's Age of Reason. There also his "safe," filled with money and valuable papers. "But where is Uncle Shine?"

Three o'clock, and in Mr. Shiner's office sits his clerk, expecting every moment the arrival of his employer. It is just the time at which he said he would return; the very time by which he expected certain work to be done, which work the clerk has performed, and of which he is ready to render an account. A quarter past three—certainly Mr. Shiner should be here now. For he wishes to look over his clerk's memoranda as to various matters, prior to his meeting the manufacturers at half-past three. It is very strange that he is so tardy this afternoon—very strange indeed. It is half-past three—and still no Mr. Shiner—and the clerk in wonder asks himself, "Why, where on earth can the 'old boy' be?"

Half-past three; and a leading manufacturer, a portly, pompous, rich man, one of the chief of those whom Mr. Shiner wishes to conciliate and favorably incline towards his model machine, enters the office, expecting to be welcomed by Shiner himself, and meets merely his clerk—no signs either of the machine. Can he himself be too early, or too late? No; his gold watch tells him that it is just half-past three—just the time appointed. Strange, very strange! Presently another manufacturer enters; then another, then a fourth, then a fifth. The number is complete. All but Mr. George H. Shiner himself. And yet it is a quarter to four. The clerk apologizes and does his best; but that is bad enough. A bell hard by strikes four. Why,

what on earth can Mr. George H. Shiner mean by making engagements with distinguished men, whose every hour is valuable, and then breaking them in this manner? It is "not the thing." The clerk again does his best. Shiner keeps in a closet in his office some excellent cigars and some capital wine (keeps them, miser as he is, on precisely the same principle as he supports a showy office, as before explained), and the clerk dispenses them. Still wine and cigars cannot compensate for loss of time, and an almost personal slight, such as Mr. Shiner has this day subjected his visitors to, by his non-attendance. No apology or explanation either. It is too much. And, after a while, the manufacturers depart, asking, "Why, what can be the cause of old Shiner acting so strangely?"

Half-past four. And Mr. Shiner's special, private, confidential agent sits waiting for his principal—who should be here now for his money. According to Shiner's instructions, the agent has sold the "collaterals" he holds, and though he has secured quite enough to cover Shiner's loan upon them, the interest of the original holders in them is entirely sacrificed. But what will Shiner care for that? Several families have been legally reduced to beggary. But what will Shiner care for that? The agent has the money—ten thousand dollars in bankable funds—ready for him. And yet old Shiner comes not to receive his treasures. And the agent asks himself, "Why, where can the old Shylock have gone to?"

Five o'clock. And in their room, or "hall," as they call it, the "Society of Free-Thinkers," as they style themselves, are assembled.

Oh! a delightful set they are, truly! A very pleasant class of the community! Men, old and young, and, alas! a few *women*, who believe neither in heaven, hell, or humanity, and who meet at stated periods to *confirm* each others errors. But Shiner, the "eccentric," as he is mildly named, is absent.

Now, the eccentric Shiner is a man of mark among the Free-Thinkers; for it is a surprising fact, that enlightened Infidels revere money and its possessors just as much as do the benighted

Christians! Besides, Mr. Shiner really writes well, and is quite an intellectual champion of Infidelity. But the *services* proceed. Blasphemy is spoken boldly, and openly applauded. And, at last, *with a mock prayer to a mock god*, the meeting is dissolved. While Mr. A——, upon whom Mr. Shiner called this morning, leaves the hall, muttering, spite his professed disbelief in a devil, —"Where in the devil is Shiner?"

Where in the devil *is* Shiner? Let us see if we can answer this question.

* * * * * * * *

We left him in his new houses. He is there still; but not in the upper stories. No—he is in the cellar, or, rather, in the place, the opening in the earth, designed for the cellar hereafter. And, somewhat strange to say, he is *lying* there—not standing, not sitting, but lying—and in by no means a graceful or comfortable position. He is asleep. Oh, yes, probably. For he does not move. And yet it is a very strange place to fall asleep in! A very odd place indeed. We do not remember ever to have come across a place more unsuitable for repose than this! Oh! a very singular place indeed for a sleeping apartment! It is rather cold and damp, too; especially towards evening. Yes, rather cold and damp. We should much prefer, for our own part, to go to sleep in a more orthodox and usual style. But then Mr. George H. Shiner always was a strange man!

Why sleeps he there? Does he not remember that he ought to have attended to many matters this very afternoon? Why was he not home at two o'clock to lunch? Did he hunger and thirst no longer, that thus he regarded not his meat and drink? At any rate, he should have remembered to have at least seen that his model-machine—that machine to which he has devoted years, was taken to his office. Why sleeps he there? Why did he not meet his clerk, according to appointment? Why has he offended the rich manufacturers by disregarding them? Why did he not call at his agent's and get the ten thousand dollars, for which he ruined several families? It would be so pleasant

to count them this evening when he is alone in his room! Why sleeps he here? Why did he not meet the Infidels this afternoon, and prove to them from his MSS. there, there is no Providence, no God, no Heaven, Hell or Hereafter? Why sleeps he here? Why does he not rise and go home?

But does he intend going home at all? Six o'clock strikes. From the Catholic church in the neighborhood peals the vespers. He always hates the sound of a church-bell. Surely this hateful sound—hateful, we mean, to a member of the "Society of Free-Thinkers"—will arouse him. But no, it awakes him not. Still in the cellar he sleeps; while from the church unto the heavens goes up the peal of the vespers!

An hour passes on—seven o'clock. Sleeps he there still? Has he no thought of the alarm his absence is causing his family? Does he not know that his sister, Mrs. Kincarde, and his niece, Eliza, are anxious concerning him? Mr. Kincarde has casually met this afternoon with one of the vexed manufacturers and with the agent of Mr. Shiner, and they have both informed him that Mr. Shiner did *not* keep his engagements with them. This, coupled with his non-fulfilling his promise to be at the house at two o'clock, alarm Mr. Kincarde seriously. Besides, the tuner has come, to heal the discordant woes of his favorite piano. This thought surely will arouse him. Does he not adore music and love his piano?

Still he sleeps. Strange! how soundly he sleeps, with his hat crushed; and separated, yes, separated, from his constant companion, the umbrella. His old-fashioned, long-tailed, threadbare coat, buttoned close; his short, dirty, drab pantaloons; his dirty, clumsy boots; these enclose him. There he lies; short, ugly, thin, ungraceful as ever; there he lies, doubled up, or contorted strangely, and with his odd, old white head against that stone. But do not examine that head too closely to see if it be bruised or crushed or no; neither look upon his eyes, or else you might think something horrible. God! you might even think that instead of being asleep, *he was dead!* And that, of course, cannot be, you know. Business men and rich men

never die. The shadows of evening cover the earth—still he sleeps in his own cellar. The people pass by to and fro on their ways homeward. Still he sleeps in his cellar. But what of that? 'Tis but a whim. For rich men and business men never die.

But we tell you, you are mistaken. Rich men *do* die sometimes. And as surely as Crœsus of old died, so surely is George H. Shiner at this very moment lying dead in his own cellar. We left him in the upper story of the house. Making a sudden movement, he lost his footing, and fell from the third story through the openings in the beams which were to support the second and first floors, clear into the cellar, and, striking his head violently against a stone, perished.

Thus died George H. Shiner, in the seventy-first year of his age. Full of years, money, sins, talent, energy, unbelief and hardness of heart.

Now, gentlemen and ladies, we can answer you your questions. Eliza Kincarde, you asked this afternoon, "Why, what on earth keeps Uncle Shine?"

We answer, *Death* keeps him. And Death *will* keep him. Clerk, you asked, "Why, where on earth can the 'old boy' be?" Why, dead in his own cellar. The manufacturers wished to know "the cause of old Shiner's acting so strangely." We reply: He acted so, *because he could not help it.* The agent asked, "Why, where can the old Shylock have gone to?" To the place where many other Shylocks have gone before and since. The Infidel inquired, "Where in the devil is Shiner?" We answer emphatically, *Shiner has gone to the devil.*

In his room the model-machine rears its proportions; the piano waits for his touch upon its keys; the "safe" is full of money and valuables; Tom Paine's "Age of Reason" is in its accustomed place—but the machinist, musician, merchant, and Infidel, lies dead in a cellar.

We wonder if he believes now that there *is* a Providence? We wonder now whether he would not be better pleased with himself had he been liberal and honest, instead of a cheat and a

miser? We wonder if he does not now believe in the existence of a God, and of a devil?

All we know is, that 'tis very dark and cold, and that old Shiner lies dead in the cellar of one of his new houses.

* * * *

When Mr. Shiner's will was read some days after his funeral, his principal heir was found to be Julia Witherson.

CHAPTER II.

WAR.

THEY fired upon Fort Sumter.

Yes, the Rebellion had begun—the great Rebellion—the greatest, fiercest, strangest civil war that earth has yet known!

Yes, the extremists of both sections had succeeded in their darling object; they had attained the end for which they had struggled so many years. At the first sound of war the enthusiastic poet, Charles Singerly, whose loss of his love had made him careless of his life, and whose sense of duty drove him to arms, became a soldier. And while he fought the foe at the South, his friend, Hericot, in the North, stayed at home trembling, and, amongst his intimates, laughed at the Quixotic Charles, and reviled his cause. And while he risked his life, Kate Somers, the woman who had for so long sought so earnestly to marry him, never once gave him a thought, but flirted gaily on with all the beaux that fortune sent her. She would not have cared, not she, had he died in battle, or lain delirious in a hospital. It was but his *money* she regarded—that out of her reach, she recked not a whit for the man.

Charles Singerly became a soldier; and he learned by experience what we call "the horrors of war."

Do you know what these are, reader? If you do *not*, thank God for your ignorance, and pray that you may never be made wiser!

Oh! of all damnable sights that are seen upon this earth (which the Calvinists tell us was made but to *be* damned) a battle is the most atrocious. Man, made in the image of his

Maker, formed in the likeness of a god of *love*, deliberately, or in the heat of an artificial fury, stabbing, shooting, maiming with his devilish instruments his brother, not because they have injured each other! oh, no, but because, forsooth, they have different kings, or different politics! And so they use the argument of the bullet and the eloquence of the sword, the logic of the bayonet and the convincing converse of the cannon! They differ, and, therefore, of course, they must shoot and be shot at. Oh, God! we cannot tell whether a battle is most absurd or most awful!

As for *glory*, when will the world learn there can be naught glorious in murder, retail or wholesale? And what were Cæsar, Charles XII, and Napoleon Bonaparte but wholesale murderers; slayers of body and of soul? Oh, heaven! the amount of anguish which these men have caused upon earth! How they have filled the hospitals with shrieks and yells of almost demoniac suffering; how fever and fracture, and delirium, and every conceivable form of sickness and sorrow have been indebted to these men!

Far away from the battle, in thousands of humble, haughty homes, how has the face of the mother, wife, sister, daughter, or beloved one yet dearer, grown white with heart-horror as they have read the long list headed by the short, simple, sharp word "*killed!*" And all this wholesale slaughter to gratify the whim of some great hell-hound! When will the world learn that the very worst use a man can be put to is to be made a soldier of? When will the Christian learn that the only pretext that can render a war anything else than a murder is self-defence? Only as a defensive war is the very one we have waged justifiable.

Charles Singerly became a soldier for the protection of his native land. He studied military matters constantly; was precise in his discipline; was active and brave; was a warrior from principle. For a while he forgot even his loved literature, and acted instead of wrote. His thoughts would often turn homeward to his friends, his mother and Julia.

With the two first he maintained a constant correspondence, but he allowed no sentimentalities, no home-yearnings to interfere with his duty. He was (what has since become rare, very rare) a faithful, hard-working, hard-studying, *sober*, brave, thoroughly respectable volunteer officer.

At last, after a very brief, but honorable career, he was wounded in a skirmish in Virginia, seriously wounded, and he was carried to a farm-house in the neighborhood, where his injuries were medically treated. As fate would have it, this very farm-house was part of the property bequeathed to Julia Witherson by her father, and had been, since his death, occupied by a distant relation.

Thus, Captain Charles Singerly, when wounded, found shelter in the house of the woman whom he loved, the woman who loved him, and yet the woman who could never be his on earth. "Well, if I die," he thought, "she shall be mine in heaven."

CHAPTER III.

SICKNESS.

A FEW days passed, and it became known in New York that Captain Charles Singerly, the poet, was wounded.

The newspapers stated the fact, and praised his heroism. Miss Kate Somers heard the news, and cared not—it was nothing to her. Henry Hericot, esq., when he learned the intelligence, remarked, with an oath, "that the fool Singerly had received the reward of his folly."

But when the Rev. George Howard heard that his friend was wounded "seriously," he determined to go to him. Howard was a true friend. His breast was full of every noble and generous emotion. No false system of theology had cramped and dwarfed his warm human nature. He had not, like many clergymen, become less than a man in seeking to become more. And so, when he heard of Charles' dangerous sickness, he resolved to make his home for a while at his side. He procured a substitute to serve his church in his absence, and then departed for "the seat of war," accompanied by Charles' mother.

Mrs. Singerly, as before hinted at, loved her child, her only son, Charles, with a love passing the common love of woman. Formerly his dissipation had given her pain; but as he had of late abandoned his wild habits, this cause of anxiety was withdrawn. In her eye, he was now almost perfection. But when his country summoned him, when he felt called upon to leave his mother for his native land, she shed some natural, bitter tears, yet she was, after all, one of America's many patriot women, and she gave her child to her country. Ah! reader, many a mother has performed this sacrifice; many a loving, delicate woman, from Maine to Maryland, has surrendered the dear one

of her eye, the idol of her parental heart, to the stern demands of duty. She has fallen on his neck, she has kissed her child's loved face ; she has fondled, lovingly, with her fingers, his hair, as she was wont to do in the days of his boyhood ; she has folded him to her heart in a passionate embrace ; she has uttered a few wild words in her anguish ; has commended him to the keeping of the God of Battles ; and then, with a mother's blessing, has sent him from her presence, perhaps, God only knows, forever. Thus it was with Mrs. Singerly. And now, when she heard that he was wounded, she fainted not, she showed none of woman's weakness. "I will go to my boy," she cried ; "now, indeed, he will need his mother." And in company of the Rev. George Howard, she departed to her suffering son.

When they reached Charles he was delirious. And in his delirium the character of the man appeared conspicuously. Now he would rave on some literary theme, some poetical theory, or romantic, or philosophical subject. Anon he would call, in stirring tones, to his troop, as though he were with his brave men, heading them and rushing upon the enemy. Then he would talk and laugh gaily, as though holding a morning's conversation with his friend Hericot. Then, he would utter some noble and generous sentiment, or would fancy himself aiding some poor man or woman, or saving some wretch's life. Then he would call tenderly upon his mother (though she was beside him and he knew her not), and, ever and anon, he would name, oh, how lovingly and passionately, in his delirium, the ever-dear name, "Julia !" He would imprint upon her imaginary brow imaginary kisses, and would give her every endearing title.

As he tossed, to and fro, those who stood by his bed saw hanging on his breast a little gold locket. His mother recognized it as the gift of Julia Witherson to her son. And when she saw this locket, which Charles had always worn next his heart, 'midst all the din of battle, the mother felt more vividly than ever before how dearly her son, spite of all, did love, and ever would love Julia. And though in his delirium, Charles kept calling, constantly and passionately, upon his dear one's name, yet, as

though some subtle instinct warned him even in his frenzy that strangers to her secret were around him, he never uttered a word relative to the cause of her separation from him; he never spoke a syllable that could compromise her. The Rev. George Howard learnt nothing from the sick-bed revelations of Charles Singerly that could throw any new light upon the misunderstanding or separation which existed between the lovers. He learnt nothing of the stain that existed on Julia's early life. He learned simply that Charles loved her passionately—and *that* he knew before.

Our hero's mother and his friend nursed him and tended upon him day and night. He was even more handsome now than when in health. His eyes were more expressive, his mouth more exquisite, his classic, intellectual face more truly beautiful. Sickness did not take away the grace of his form, nor rob his voice of its accustomed music. Day and night his friend and mother, aided by a skillful physician, tended upon him; and, at last, Charles recovered and was himself again. He embraced his mother, and welcomed her with all the swelling tenderness of his loving and dutiful heart. He embraced his friend with the affection of a brother. He detailed to his interested auditors the story of his adventures (though he modestly said as little about his own warlike achievements as possible); and then he questioned them about "home," about his friend, Hericot, and kindred matters. And, though he said nothing on the subject to his mother, he was continually asking the Rev. George Howard concerning Julia Witherson. And his love was rendered more evident to Howard at every inquiry. Reader, there are certain facts in the future which can safely and certainly be prophesied from our knowledge of human nature; and amongst these is the fact that Charles will cease to love Julia only when he ceases to live.

Charles was blessed with that very rare blessing, a really skillful physician, brought from New York, "at great expense," by his mother. Our hero promised to do well. The doctor soon announced, in a learned, pompous style, his belief in Charles'

ultimate cure ; took unto himself the lion's share of the credit, and left with the physician of the place minute instructions as to the further treatment of the patient (among these was the warning that he might possibly have a relapse, in which case he, Dr. K——, must be sent for.) Then, advising that Charles should not be moved for some time to come, Dr. K——, having received a liberal bank check from Mrs. Singerly, took his departure for New York, while Charles still remained upon his sick-bed in Virginia.

But another and a yet more skillful physician stayed with him —a physician of souls—a clergyman—his friend, the Rev. Geo. Howard, who was now needed in his professional capacity. For Charles Singerly began to meditate upon religion. In health we may be careless on religious matters, but when we lie vibrating between life and death, we then give these topics our careful thought. Not like cowards, who are frightened, but like sensible men, who are led to see old things in a new light. And thus with our hero.

He had lived a non-religious man. His disposition, his youth, his associates, tended to render him thus. But it was chiefly the number of hypocrites, and the narrow, unphilosophical and bigoted creeds which disgusted him. He saw that the world, though nominally Christian, was really almost heathen. Still, he was far from being positively irreligious. He was no skeptic, differing in this respect from Hericot, whose infidelity gave him pain. He respected religion, also, for his mother's sake. He was a literary student of the Bible ; believed, in a general way, in a God and judgment ; was a noble, generous fellow, and had all the seeds of goodness within him. And now, as he lay upon his sick bed, he began to think whether, after all, he was right in his religious carelessness. He remembered that his friend Howard had once said :

"If this world is evil *with* religion, how much worse would it be *without* it ? Hypocrisy itself is but a base compliment to piety ! But hypocrites are not the true test of Christianity ;

religion is not responsible for them.) Judge Christianity by its saints, not its sinners.) Read the Bible thoughtfully, and ask your honest soul if its precepts be not worthy practice? if the world would not be wiser were the Bible its alpha; if earth would not be Paradise were the Bible its omega? Does not the Scripture lead a man to honor while mortal Does it not bring a man to peace in death, and to bliss in immortality?"

He remembered that his friend Howard had once said this; and he now asked himself whether his friend Howard had not spoken truth? So Charles, having become a patriot, now became a Christian. Our hero asked if it was necessary to join a particular church or sect. Mrs. Singerly, like most religious people, answered "Yes," decidedly, and suggested the Episcopal church. The Rev. George Howard said, on the other hand, "that it was *not* necessary—that a form of religion, a sect, is to true religion what *a coat* is *to a man;* one may wear a coat of this fashion or of that, or no coat at all, and still be a man; that it was entirely discretionary this 'joining church,' the great point being *to lead a good life.*" This struck Mrs. Singerly as being very strange language for a clergyman; probably it may seem so to our readers; but we believe it to be the truth.

So Charles, the Christian, did *not* become Charles the sectarian.

There are many varieties of religion in this world. Thus, the religion of Kate Somers, false, formal, producing no effect upon her heart and life—a religion more abominable in the sight of heaven than even Hericot's Atheism. Then the religion of Mrs. Singerly, true, sincere, orthodox, but somewhat too narrow and conventional. Then the religion of Julia Witherson, more practical than theoretical, a noble, generous creed. Then the religion of Charles Singerly, a poet's faith. Lastly, the religion of the Rev. George Howard, utterly *non*-conventional, not orthodox in the usual sense, totally free from bigotry or formal trammels; a creed of com-

mon sense, fitted for the world, practical, at the same time poetical, soul-filling, heart-touching, Scriptural! Need we say that the *last* is *best*?

But enough on this point. Let us go back a few weeks, and betake ourselves for awhile to New York and Julia.

CHAPTER IV.

TWO MEETINGS.

Our heroine has, of late, devoted herself to three objects in life—her studies, her efforts at reformation among the sinful of her sex, and her love for Charles Singerly.

Her studies, as we have before hinted, have always been of a wild, metaphysical nature; branches of learning not often essayed by either male or female scholars. She is sufficiently *au fait* in the every-day knowledge of the world, in the lore of modern society; but her prime speciality is the learned discussion of abstruse metaphysical questions, which have little or nothing to do with the ordinary affairs of life. These wild studies may originally have contributed (by unsexing her mind and bewildering her intellect) to her early false morality and youthful error. But she pursues them now for the purpose of creating a mental element about her which would contrast utterly with the sad realities of her life, and thus, by the very contrast, soothe her spirit. Julia has a powerful mind, and her attainments in this peculiar lore are really amazing—almost as wonderful as her skill in music, that skill which has so strangely made her a rich woman.

And, speaking of our heroine's wealth, we must say that she spends it in a royal manner. Her dresses are magnificent, though as modest and tasteful as ever. She has completely changed the appearance of her uncle's house in its interior; for she has sumptuously re-furnished it from top to bottom. She has also purchased a fine pair of horses and a most elegant equipage. Also a large library of the rarest and most superb books. We must confess that Julia is somewhat extravagant; but then she is so charitable. She supports a regiment, almost, of poor men and women; she contributes liberally; she assists the deserving.

And her money, too, is most useful in her labors among the fallen of her sex. By its means she is enabled to render those she saves independent of the necessity of living by sin. Her generosity preserves them from evil. Long may she flourish.

We wonder if the departed Shiner, that heartless miser, ever sees the careless, extravagant, generous manner in which his money is expended! If he does, how his avaricious ghost must groan!

As to our heroine's love for the man of her heart, the only man she has ever really loved, need we say that time has only strengthened this passion? Their separation, the mother's ban, —what are these? Human hearts do not love only when human bodies are together; the spiritual can survive the absence of the physical—love knows no ban. From the day that they were parted by the mother's act, Julia has never ceased to think of Charles, to read every line of his books, to feast her eyes upon him as often as possible (even though at a distance, or furtively, or but for a moment, though they seldom met, and still more rarely spoke), and especially was she delighted to hear from him through their mutual friend, the Rev. George Howard.

And the hope of her life is her thought that *some* day her lover's mother, with her prejudices softened, her heart moved by their patient love, her soul appreciating the reformation of Julia herself, and, especially, appreciating Julia's peculiar mode of expiating (of which she cherished a vague idea of causing Mrs. Singerly to be informed), would withdraw her ban, accept the daughter, and make happy a son. That Charles loved her, Julia never doubted; that he ever would love her faithfully, the instinct of her heart taught her. All will come right at last. Such was her hope on earth, her prayer to heaven.

When the war broke out, she, knowing her lover's manliness, felt convinced that he would not be idle in the quarrel. And one day when she received a hurried note from him, bidding her farewell, perhaps forever, hoping to meet her above, as they seemed destined not to be blest below, and stating that he was "off to the war," she did not feel a shock of surprise. She

merely prayed to her God night and morning to guard the new soldier of the Republic, and loved him more than ever.

She read the papers with interest, and one day she learned that he was wounded seriously in a skirmish, which had taken place, by a singular coincidence, near the very farm which she herself had inherited from her father. She also learned that Mrs. Singerly, the Rev. George Howard, and Dr. K—— were going down to the wounded hero ; and sending for Howard, entreated him to forward her word constantly of his friend's condition. Shortly afterwards she learned, partly by a letter from Howard, partly from the relative who occupied her farm, that at this very farm-house her lover was lying dangerously ill, and that many other wounded officers and soldiers, participants in the recent skirmish, were quartered in the neighborhood.

And now Julia Witherson, who was, as we have shown, a bold, original woman, independent in her actions, conceived the idea of going down herself to her farm, in the capacity of a nurse for the wounded. She had, of course, a right to visit her own farm (which she had seen but once since her father's death) ; she could do much good, could bring many comforts to the sick and suffering ; more than all, her heart whispered, "You can be near him." She acted on this idea. She asked no one to *chaperone* her. She announced her intention to her uncle and aunt, overcame their opposition, and departed, with a load of medicines and creature-comforts among her baggage, and a load of loving care within her heart. And thus she reached Virginia, accompanied only by her faithful, humble friend, young Mary Barton.

Julia found the little hamlet in which her farm-house was situated crowded to excess ; her own house, being the largest and best in the place, was especially full. So she and Mary Barton took up their abode elsewhere in the neighborhood, making the best of very poor accommodations.

Now Mrs. Singerly had discovered before this, that the house whose hospitalities her wounded son enjoyed was owned by the very woman whom she had separated from that

son. It was the fate of war. Charles could not be moved. There was no help for it. Besides, Miss Witherson had, through a letter to her friend Howard, in the kindest manner, offered the house and all that it contained to the service of Mrs. Singerly and of her son. But, nevertheless, our mother felt it to be an unpleasant position.

At last she and Miss Witherson met. Both were most embarrassingly polite; but under the cloak of formality was hidden deep feeling upon both sides. Still none of the feeling showed itself, only the formality.

Mrs. S. expressed her great obligations to Miss W., and regretted that she must avail herself of it for some time longer. Miss W. expressed her happiness in being able to contribute in any degree to their comfort, and inquired after the state of Mr. Charles Singerly. But, spite of all her efforts, as she asked this latter question, as she uttered the beloved name, Julia's voice had a tender quaver in it which told to Mrs. Singerly's heart with an irresistible eloquence how dearly Julia Witherson still loved her son. Mrs. S. replied that Mr. Charles is now somewhat better; she trusted he would shortly recover, and in this style the conversation progressed.

This was the first time that the parties had met since the memorable afternoon in which they had so sadly parted. Both looked at each other with some curiosity. Mrs. Singerly was the same petite, lady-like, elegant, sedate-looking as woman, but her expressive face was more care-worn than formerly. "*Our* separation and *his* sickness trouble her," thought Julia. On her side Miss Witherson looked more than wontedly beautiful. Her tall, luxuriant form, her long, dark, rich hair, her graceful pride of movement were unchanged; but her face appeared to have increased in the ntelligence, courage and soul of its expression. She seemed like a thoughtful, noble, yet passionate woman, "made perfect through suffering." "She looks grandly; I can trace her repentance in her fine dark eyes. What a wife she

would make for Charles, had she never erred." So thought Mrs. Singerly; but in a few moments the conversation was at an end. Both parties, with profoundly-polite bows, separated.

Julia read, in the formal manner of Charles' mother a declaration of her unchangeable purpose to keep herself and Charles forever separated. But Mrs. Singerly's thoughts were very different thoughts from what Julia imagined them.

She had often heard, since that memorable afternoon, from the Rev. George Howard, and from other sources, of Julia's recent good life, her charity, her peculiar modesty of dress and behaviour, her religious observances and profession. She could not but admire Julia's noble conduct in her confessions to her son and herself; she appreciated her refusal to wed Charles without his mother's consent; she felt that she had truly repented of that fatal error of her early life; that since then she had led, and ever would lead a most virtuous and holy existence; she also felt that her son and Julia loved with an affection that would last till death. That tender quaver in her voice when she asked concerning Charles' condition. Her very visit to this place at this time, though nominally to see her farm, and to succor the wounded. These are but further indications of her love. And Mrs. Singerly thought of Julia almost tenderly.

"But then, her early error. It may be forgiven, but can never be forgotten. It is, indeed, fatal. Nothing on earth can ever atone for it. Its memory, like a thing of blight, *must*, by the laws of God and man, blast her every hour of life. It is hard, but it is just. We women have great responsibilities. If we meet them not we must meet in their stead with retribution. If we sin we must also suffer. No, no, she can never be *his* wife." And Mrs. Singerly thought of Julia almost sternly.

She said nothing to Charles, however, concerning her meeting with Julia. In fact, her son was utterly ignorant of the presence near him of the woman he loved. *He* thought her,

of course, hundreds of miles away in New York. He dreamt not of her being almost beside him in Virginia.

At last, by accident, he discovered from one of the attendants that *she*, the woman of his heart, the woman for whom he pined more in sickness than even in health, was living in the same hamlet with him. He also ascertained the ostensible purposes of her visit, but his quick instinct told him what were the *real* motives, and in his heart of hearts he blessed her. But he said nothing of his discovery to either his mother or his friend. But once from his sick bed he caught a glimpse of her across the fields, and he was happy for the rest of the day.

And Julia pursued her career of duty, succored the wounded, nursed the sick, fed the hungry, administered spiritual consolation to the dying, daily inquired about Charles from her friend, nightly prayed for her lover, and then dreamed about him the rest of the night.

* * * * * * * *

But the relapse of which Dr. K—— had spoken, previous to his departure, now took place in Charles' disease ; he was taken "sick even unto death." And suddenly the sufferer turned abruptly to his mother and his friend Howard, who were at his bedside, and said to them, without preface, "Let me see Julia—*my* Julia. I know that she is here. I may die, and I must see her once more before I leave her forever." And his mother could not gainsay him. Miss Witherson was sent for and came, and Mrs. Singerly and Howard retiring, the lovers were left alone together for the first time for years.

They were face to face. Charles on his bed of suffering ; Julia erect, in her health and her sorrow.

"My Julia !"

"My Charles !"

Such were the simple, heartful words with which they met.

They looked upon each other. Looked, as though it were

for the last time. Charles, though his sickness told upon his appearance, was still most handsome, most nobly classic in the expression of his features. Soul was stamped upon every line of his lineaments. His eye beamed with the radiant beauty of tenderness as he gazed upon his visitor; and Julia fondly thought that never before had she seen a man so glorious. And Julia herself seemed to Charles more lovely than ever before. Her face assumed an expression typical of her sublime repentance and her pure love.

"My Charles!"

"My Julia!"

And the lovers were locked in a passionate embrace. All the formality that might have seemed proper to Miss Witherson in her peculiar position in regard to Mr., or rather *Capt.* Singerly, was spurned in the rush of her mighty and long-restrained love. All was forgotten save that they were in each other's arms.

Julia's magnificent, proud form was bent over the bed on which Charles was lying. Her rich, dark hair escaping from the confinement of the comb, was flung around her shoulders. It strayed over the breast of her lover, whose exquisite mouth was pressed in a still more exquisite embrace to the ripe lips of the woman whom he worshiped. His arm and delicate jeweled hand was thrown tightly, but oh! how lovingly around her waist. The rapture of that moment, of that close embrace, that burning kiss, more than repaid them for their long sorrows.

There is a divinity in love triumphant which more than atones in a moment for the agonies of years! One hour of heaven repays in full the life-long woes of earth!

For a while there was silence. At last Charles spoke.

"Julia," he said, in a voice of indescribable tenderness; "Julia, my own one, my more than life, I am dying, I fear. Fear not for my own sake. No, thanks to God, I have made my peace with heaven; but I do so dread and grieve to leave thee. Thou, who art next to my God; thou, whom I have loved more and more each day; thou, my dream, my inspiration. Yet the doc-

tor tells me that my life hangs on a thread—that in a few days I may be dead. Oh, it is so hard, my Julia, to give up all hope of ever calling thee mine! For, despite our separation, I have ever hoped as well as loved."

"But thou wilt not die, dearest," interrupted Julia, passionately.

"Nay, Julia; if I do, what matters it? We shall meet above—we shall be joined together, if not here, then *there!* And our union there will be sweeter far—for it will be eternal. Love like ours must be victorious at the last—if not on earth, why, then in heaven!"

"But thou wilt *not* die, dearest," still reiterated Julia, who now indeed felt how truly she loved him. For the idea of his death gave her a shock more bitter than death itself. She now felt how the thought and hope of him had been interwoven with every thread of her life—that he was the source of her repentance, her atonement, her hope—that without him the breath of life was not worth the trouble of breathing.

"Nay, sweetest, noblest, purest, do not mind my death. Let that be as God wills. But let us thank God that we have never doubted each other's love, or truth. Though we have been parted, though we have seldom met, yet we have been true to ourselves and to each other. Have we not? Throughout our long absence our love has but burnt brighter day by day. We have lived for each other. Lived and worked to be more worthy of each other's love. Is it not so?"

"God knows that you speak truth," was the reply of Julia, as she tenderly kissed the forehead of her lover.

"And yet it is so hard, to love each other thus, and still be ever parted. Death, on the one hand, a mother's ban upon the other."

"Is there no hope that she will some day be reconciled to our union? Will she never accept my true repentance; for that it is true, He in heaven can bear witness! Will your mother never become *mine?*"

Perhaps it was not fitting in the proud Julia to ask such questions as these of her lover. The proprieties of her position and

delicacy may have forbidden their utterance. But love ofttimes proves stronger than etiquette. Passion often bursts the bonds of the "proprieties." Will not our readers who have loved forgive her?

And Charles replied to her questions thus: "Ah, dearest, my mother has learned to respect you—but PREJUDICE, you know, is omnipotent in this world. It can prove victorious over respect, over love itself. And my dear mother, God bless her, has her prejudices. But let us speak not now of this. I am about to die, and I have called you to my bed-side to bid you good-bye—but not forever—only until we meet again in heaven. Kiss me, my own one, my loved one, kiss me once more."

"And, Charles, let this kiss be the token that you forgive me for my early and my fatal sin—that you, at least, accept my sorrow and my true repentance."

"Forgive you! I have nothing to forgive. It is *I* who need forgiveness. Your sorrow, your spotless life for years, your glorious conduct to myself and to my mother, your religion and your charity (of which I have heard from many quarters), these have rendered you, compared to me, with my wild career, my luxurious ease and false self-satisfaction, my sensual sins and open irreligion, as a saint unto a sinner. Ah, Julia, noblest one, it is you who are the pure one of us two. So heaven counts you, and so I regard you. Then, kiss me, Julia, and say that you forgive me."

"Nay, Charles, 'tis I who must kneel as I kiss you, and beg your pardon."

And with her lover's arms clasped tightly around her, she knelt beside his couch, and kissed him. It was a long, tender, passionate, burning, rapturous, heart-thrilling, soul-stirring, yet a sad kiss; a kiss which was mingled of heaven and of earth, of bitter memories—a present joy, a future hope, and a future fear.

The sunlight falls upon Julia's splendid hair, which is gloriously dishevelled; and it plays and dances upon the bed where Charles lies with his lips fast pressed to Julia's. And through the open window is heard the songs of the birds. Happy birds! who are never parted and who never sin! And the fields are

green and lovely. Happy fields ! ye have neither lips nor hearts ! And so it never happens that your lips are pressed together, though your hearts are broken.

She kneels ; he clasps her tight, and their mutual love is sealed forever.

At last this long, glorious, half-rapturous, half-bitter embrace is over. Charles breaks the silence—thus :

"Dearest, if I die, you will, for my sake, think well of and be kind to my mother ; will you not ?"

"Oh, Charles, I have always loved her, since first you spoke of her. Is she not *your* mother ?"

"Keep my memory green, too, dearest. Forget me not when I have gone."

"*Forget* you ? I shall love thy memory as I love thyself."

"You see this little locket. It is the one you gave me. I have always worn it next my heart. It shall always be there. I shall carry it with me into my coffin—into my grave ; perhaps into heaven itself at the resurrection—who knows ? One thing more: I shall leave you my diary. No living eyes but your own and mine have ever seen or shall ever see it. There you will learn the history of my life, and the history of my love. There you will see how truly I have loved you."

"Ah, Charles, I need no proof of *that*. But why talk of death ? Oh ! something, like a gleam of inspiration, flashes on me, and shows me the future. It tells me that you shall *not* die, and that we will be happy yet."

As though she were, indeed, inspired with a knowledge of futurity, her glorious eyes sparkled, and her fine face lightened. For the first time during the interview, she heard the songs of the birds and saw the beauty of the scenery without.

"Fond prophetess !" cried Charles, "God grant your vision be a true one. Oh ! it is so sweet *even* to hope to live, only to *dream* of calling thee mine. Nevertheless," (and he raised his eyes upward), "'not my will, but thine be done.'"

Reader, if there ever was a true Christian, it was Charles Singerly at this moment.

"Promise me, dearest, said Julia, "that, if you recover, as I

feel you will, you will go to war no more. Something tells me that this war will last, not for months, but for years. You are not fitted to make a business of man-slaying. You have already done enough. You have a stake in the community. You can serve your country more by your pen than by your sword. At home, I can hear of you, can see you sometimes; for years I have watched your movements."

"And I yours."

"But away in the far South, amidst the din of battle, we will be indeed parted. Promise me that you will leave *me* to decide when it is time for you to return to the field. I love my country and your honor. Let me decide when both of these demand your risking death once more. Promise—for your mother's sake—and mine."

"I *do* promise, dearest."

"And now, Charles, though I would love ever to be with you, I must leave you."

"Not yet, dearest. Remember, we may never meet again."

"Oh, yes; we *will* meet, and meet to part not. You will not die. But you need rest. I shall be near you. But, indeed, dearest, it is best we see not each other until that good time comes for which we both are hoping. Let us wait—and work—and pray—and hope—and love. And heaven, in its own good season, will soften your mother's heart toward me. The memory of this meeting will keep me in joy until we meet again, to part no more."

"In heaven," cried Charles.

"Aye, and on earth, too," answered Julia. "Good-bye."

"Farewell forever," cried Charles.

"Farewell, but *not* forever," replied Julia.

One kiss—a sigh—a smile—two "God bless you's"—a tight embrace—another tender kiss—a last, long look—and Charles was alone. And the birds sang gaily; and the air was balmy; and the fields were green; and the sick man began to hope, indeed, that he might live. And then he sunk back on his couch exhausted.

CHAPTER V.

TWO DISCOVERIES.

CHARLES SINGERLY recovered. Dr. K—— was sent for, watched him through the crisis of his relapse, and left him restored, though still very weak. Julia thanked God, and took courage.

But a new misfortune fell, at this juncture, upon our hero. It is a remarkable fact that troubles seldom come singly. Like cattle, they go in herds; like wild horses, they rush in droves—in almost armies. *Why*, we leave philosophy to explain, if it can. We merely state the fact.

Charles' agent, the man in whom he had placed for years the utmost confidence, which had been fully justified, the man who had the whole control of his pecuniary affairs during his absence, in an evil hour was tempted and fell. In short, the agent absconded—left the country—with the greater part of Charles' funds, leaving our hero and his mother comparatively penniless.

In Charles' feeble state of health, they feared to communicate to him this fearful intelligence. But as one disease often drives out from the system the seeds of another, so the news of this calamity caused our hero to almost forget his sickness. And it also brought out, as all great calamities do in truly noble souls, the *genuine man*, the man of sense and energy, which had for years been concealed under Charles Singerly's elegant, literary, and somewhat indolent exterior.

He kissed his mother tenderly:

"Dear mother, I can now have a pleasure which I have never yet enjoyed—the luxury of working for you. I have youth, health, a good education, a fair share of talent, a few firm friends.

Aye, more than these, I have ambition, determination, energies, which I have never yet used—principles, which I can now put to the test, the smile of heaven, and thy love. What need I more ?"

"God bless you, my noble boy. You have not proved false to thy mother or thyself in the hour of trial. May the Lord God of Israel bless thee."

The parent and child were clasped in a holy embrace.

Ah, reader, manliness, love, and true religion can support one under even poverty—*sudden* poverty, that greatest of earthly evils.

"Let me but first get well, my mother ; and then you shall see that your boy, of whom you are so fond, will not disgrace you in adversity."

"As he never has in prosperity."

And the mother and son were dearer to each other in that moment than ever before. Howard, too, much as he had always admired his friend, henceforth regarded him with even greater esteem.

He told Julia of the calamity which had befallen Charles.

"How did he bear the news ?" she asked.

"Nobly," was the reply, "as a man, and a soldier, and a Christian should."

"Why did I ask such a question ? Did I not *know* that he would be equal to *any* fate ?" said Julia, as though to herself. Then addressing directly her companion, she asked :

"Is he entirely ruined ?"

"He is not worth over five thousand dollars in the world. He who a year ago was worth twenty times that sum."

Singular to state, a smile of happiness spread itself over Julia's expressive face. What ! could she be heartless enough to rejoice in the worldly ruin of the man who loved her ? Impossible. And yet, assuredly, she smiled ; and certainly her smile was not one of sadness. Howard wondered at her, and left her.

"How glad I am." These were her very words, uttered aloud,

though there were none to hear them, for the clergyman was gone.

"How glad I am!" Strange words these from *her* under the circumstances. Can she be glad that her lover must surrender all his ease and comfort, and suffer affliction? We can hardly answer "yes," and yet these were her very words.

The next day Miss Witherson told the Rev. George Howard that she was summoned to New York upon urgent business; and leaving a message of farewell for Mrs. Singerly and her son, our heroine departed to attend to her "urgent business."

Remarkable to state, a smile played continually upon her lips during her journey northward. Hers were certainly happy thoughts. Yet what on earth could be the source of her present happiness? Well, all women are mysteries; and Julia Witherson is especially mysterious!

A few days elapsed. Spite of his bad news, Charles recovered rapidly. It seemed as though the necessity for exertion served as a remedy for his disease. As he lay on his couch his mind matured its plans for the future. He had learned the general details of business from his father, who had been a successful merchant. He was himself an author of considerable celebrity. Between literature and business he could earn a respectable living; or if he continued in the army his pay as captain was something; and he might combine with his official position the post of correspondent to some leading newspaper. But on reflection he abandoned the idea of the army, for, beside the risks attached to it, he must be separated from his mother, who needed his society now more than ever; besides, there was his promise to Julia. No, on his recovery he would resign his commission, and would devote himself to business or literature, or both.

As for Mrs. Singerly she gave herself wholly to her son whom she now loved with a double fervor. Between her love and her religion she found comfort. And the Rev. George Howard ever and anon wondered as he thought of the strange

smile that has passed over Julia Witherson's face when he told her that Charles Singerly was "ruined."

Late one fine afternoon, just as the twilight hour was born, a remarkable letter, a wonderful letter, a most astonishing letter, reached the farm house, directed to

"Captain Charles Singerly."

This letter was from a lawyer, and was one of the most brief, important, and astonishing variety; such a letter as not one man out of a thousand ever receives, and this thousandth man only once in his lifetime.

The epistle simply stated that the writer (a lawyer who subscribed himself "W—— D——, New York,") was directed by his client, who, he stated, must remain unknown, to hand over to Captain Charles Singerly, or his representatives, checks, money, bonds and stocks to the amount of one hundred thousand dollars, being in payment of a debt due to the family of Captain Singerly by his client. That the money lawfully belonged to Captain Singerly, who should have no scruple in accepting it; and that at any rate his client would never touch this money, which must either pass into Captain Singerly's hands, or remain idle. The writer laid particular stress on the fact that the money was not a gift but rightfully belonged to the Singerly family, and concluded by giving his address and stating that he should hold the money subject to the order of Captain Singerly.

To describe the astonishment of Charles, his mother, and his friend, is simply impossible. At first they were almost tempted to think that it was all a dream; but no, there was the letter, a palpable thing enough, and besides Howard was acquainted with Mr. W—— D——, the writer. Then the mother suggested it might be a hoax; but the high, professional character of the writer forbade such a supposition. No, whatever else it was it was certainly a bona fide offer of one hundred thousand dollars. Possibly it might be a gift after all from some generous millionaire who had heard of the sudden and undeserved affliction of the Singerly family.

But then, such gifts as these are rare, very rare ; and the tenor of the letter militated against such a supposition.

Perhaps the epistle said but truth when it spoke of the money as a *debt*. Mrs. Singerly remembered that her husband had often alluded to very large sums of money due to him. It might be that hearing of their misfortunes the feelings of one of these debtors were aroused, and he took this opportunity of repaying his dead creditor by doing justice to his afflicted family. But on the other hand, such acts were most amazingly uncommon, and debts as large as this were seldom contracted, forgotten, and then suddenly paid in a mysterious manner.

The more they thought and talked about this letter, the more they became in doubt, astonishment and surmise ; and then the important question arose, " Should they accept this money ?" Our readers may wonder that such a question as this should arise, but it must be remembered that neither Mrs. Singerly or her son were mercenary ; on the contrary, they were very proud, and their pride forbade them to accept money until it was proved satisfactorily to justly belong to them.

Suddenly an idea entered into Charles' brain as to the source of this money. It must have been a pleasing one, for he smiled ; but at any rate he restrained his first thought of communicating this idea to his companions, and preserved utter silence in regard to it.

About the same time an idea entered the brain of the Rev. George Howard on the very same subject ; and he, too, smiled, but was likewise silent in regard to it. But he muttered to himself, "Yes, it must be so. I understand all now."

" Understand all what ?"

At last it was determined that Howard should go to New York (as Charles was yet unable to travel), should see the lawyer, and endeavor to discover all that could possibly be ascertained in regard to this mysterious matter, and should then return and report progress ; and by his report and opi-

nions founded thereon, Charles' course should be guided in the transaction.

So Howard departed on his mission.

During his absence, which lasted some time, Charles and his mother discussed *the* letter, and pondered over it, read and re-read its every word.

"This sum," remarked Charles, one day, "this one hundred thousand dollars is almost exactly the amount that Mr. H——, our agent, run away with. Singular coincidence, is it not? Still more singular that it should happen just at this very time."

And amongst all the probable, improbable, possible and impossible sources from whence this money might come, *one* source especially impressed itself upon Charles' imagination.

What this source was we shall soon know.

One day a letter was received from Howard, stating that Charles should expect his return within forty-eight hours.

This period was one of great impatience to Charles and his mother; but at last their anxiety and curiosity were relieved. Within the appointed time the clergyman returned.

At the moment of Howard's arrival, Charles was reclining on a settee, placed nearer the window than the bed had been (for he avoided his bed now as much as possible and substituted the settee); but when Howard entered, our hero, in his excitement, almost arose to his feet, for the first time for weeks.

"Have you been successful?" he asked of his friend. "Have you discovered anything?"

"Yes," was the reply; "I know each and every particular in regard to the mysterious fortune."

"Was it a trick?" inquired the mother, who was present.

"No, madam," replied Howard. "It is a bona-fide transaction."

"Is it a debt justly due us, then, as the letter states?" asked Charles.

"No," said Howard; "and yet, looking at it in the light in which the giver——"

"Ah, it is a gift then, after all."

"Nay, scarcely a gift either."

"Why, George," cried Charles, "you are as mysterious yourself as the hundred thousand dollars."

"Well, listen to me," said the clergyman, "and 'I will a plain, unvarnished tale deliver.' And you will soon understand all. On my arrival in New York, my first step was to call upon my friend Mr. W—— D——, the lawyer. He was not aware of my great intimacy with you, nor of my knowledge of the mysterious letter, and I kept him in ignorance of both for some time, while I endeavored, in the phrase, 'to pump him,' to 'draw him out.' But it was of no avail. I then threw off the mask, and told him all I knew, and asked him to give me some clue to the mysteriously generous or wonderfully just man or woman."

"*Woman*," interrupted Mrs. Singerly; "I never thought this money might have been sent us by a woman. And yet it may be so." And a new idea seemed to have flashed across *her* brain.

Howard continued his narrative. "But Mr. W—— D—— was as silent now on *the* subject as he was before, even though I told him that in all probability Capt. Singerly would not accept the money until he was aware of all the important particulars concerning it. Still he was mysterious. Then I told him that I had my suspicions concerning the party from whom the money came. Still he was as uncommunicative as the grave. So I left him."

"What clue had you now?" asked Charles.

"None at all," replied Howard, "saving an idea which had lain in my brain from the very hour I first read the letter. And this idea led me to the house of Mr. Russel, where I found Julia Witherson."

"Julia," cried Charles.

"Miss Witherson!" exclaimed Mrs. Singerly. "What has *she* to do with this matter?"

"Much, very much," replied Howard, "as you will now see, my very dear madam. For, strange as you may think my pro-

ceeding, I accosted Miss Witherson abruptly thus : 'Capt. Singerly has had a fortune thrust upon him of one hundred thousand dollars.' She heard me, and she *tried* to look astonished, but she did not succeed. She evidently *knew* the fact of which I pretended to inform her, though none were supposed to be aware of it, saving the lawyer, our three selves, and the man or woman who sent the money. I then said, still more abruptly 'Miss Witherson, *you* are the person who instructed Mr. W—— D—— to write a mysterious letter to Capt. Singerly. You are the generous woman who deposited one hundred thousand dollars in his hands, to be devoted to restoring the fortunes of Charles and his mother. Can you look me in the face and honestly deny it?' The suddenness with which I brought this charge against her accomplished my object. She could not deny, but confessed that I had guessed rightly. She begged me not to betray her secret; but on this point I was obdurate. Tell you I would. And told you I have."

It would be very difficult to do adequate justice to the emotions of Mrs. Singerly when she learned that Julia Witherson, the woman whom she had regarded as unworthy an alliance with her son, was, of all the millions upon earth, *the* one who would preserve, at the expense of half her fortune, from the evils of poverty, the man to whom she could never be united. Wonder, appreciation, gratitude, aye, almost love—these she experienced. But she also felt another emotion—that of *pride*. Should she and her son accept such a gift, such *charity*, and from *her* to whom they bore such delicate, yet unpleasant relations?

As for Charles Singerly, this last instance and proof of Julia's nobility of soul, generous self-sacrifice and love, overpowered him. A wild suspicion that possibly she might be the one from whom this money came had entered his mind at the first receipt of the mysterious letter. But it had departed; and though it occasionally visited his mind, it merely came as a vague, possible suspicion. But now it was confirmed. This wild idea was a reality. Nearly one-half of her whole wealth (with the fact of Julia's inheritance of a large property from Mr. Shiner, of

course the Singerlys and Mr. Howard were aware) was freely given to the man she loved—in vain. Given, too, secretly and modestly, and unostentatiously. Oh, noble, generous, extraordinary Julia !

We may here remark, also, that the Rev. George Howard (knowing, as he did, Julia's character, her generosity, her wealth, her carelessness of money, and her love for Charles, coupled with the facts of her singular manner and smile when hearing of Charles' ruin, her sudden departure and the mysterious wording of the note, as though the party particularly desired concealment) had suspected Julia Witherson from the very hour in which the letter was received. When he exclaimed, "Yes, it must be so ; I understand all now," he referred to this suspicion and to the explanation it afforded of Julia's smile of satisfaction when she heard of Charles' misfortune. She smiled, because she felt how sweet it would be for *her* to aid him. Acting on this suspicion, Howard, during his visit to New York, discovered all.

But Mrs. Singerly, after her surprise at the announcement of the Rev. Howard's had subsided, suggested that the letter had stated that the money was in "payment of a debt due ;" also, that "the money was *not* a gift but lawfully belonged to the Singerly family." Now, as Miss Witherson owed nothing to the family of her son, Mrs. S. contended that the money *was* a gift, after all, and that therefore a positive deception had been employed by Miss W.

The Rev. Howard replied, that he had spoken to Julia on this point, and that she had explained the matter thus : on looking over some of the papers of Mr. George H. Shiner, which had fallen into her possession, she became aware of the fact, that at the time that Mr. Singerly, the father of Charles, died, there existed unsettled accounts between him and Mr. Shiner to the amount of many thousands of dollars. As Mr. Shiner himself had never adjusted these accounts, she, as the heir and pecuniary representative of Mr. Shiner, really owed a large though indefinite amount to the representatives of Mr. Singerly, senior. "Besides," said Miss Witherson,

"I owe a debt of love and gratitude to C arles, and a debt of duty and respect to his mother, which is as binding as any pecuniary obligation, and which no pecuniary payment can ever adequately discharge." "Thus, you see," said the clergyman, "that, after all the letter states, according to *her* views, only the truth. And, oh, you should have seen, or rather heard, how eloquently she begged me *not* to betray her secret, *not* to tell you from whom the money came. But I was obdurate on this point—I was obstinate—I was determined that she should not hide her light under a bushel—but that her good works should be made known, at least to you. Was I not right?"

"Yes, yes, very right," was all that Charles could utter, so much affected was he.

"But," continued the Rev. George Howard, "I have made yet another discovery concerning Julia Witherson, during my recent visit to New York. A discovery yet more astonishing."

"Why, what *can* you mean, George?" asked Charles, in great surprise.

"Why, I simply mean to say that, besides discovering that she is the generous donor of those very apropos one hundred thousand dollars, I have also ascertained that she is the principal figure in one of the most remarkable series of scenes known to either ancient or modern times."

"Explain yourself," cried Charles, while his mother became more and more amazed.

"Listen, then," said Howard. "After satisfying myself in regard to the history of our mysterious letter, I devoted a day or two to the arrangement of my own affairs. And then I happened casually to meet Henry Hericot, Esq. Charles, take my word for it, that man is a thoroughly unprincipled and heartless fellow. He asked after you, of course, but with an evident lack of interest, his questions were mere formalities. He thinks now that you are poor, you can do nothing for him. It is my belief that your death now would cause him not five minutes' sorrow."

"Nay, George," interrupted Charles, "you always were

somewhat prejudiced against Harry. You do him injustice, indeed you do."

"Well," continued Howard, "scarcely had I left Hericot when I met Miss Kate Somers, who, like Hericot, was on a 'flying visit' to town for a few days—stolen from the dissipations of the watering-places. She, too, inquired after you, but she evidently cares no more for you now than Hericot does. In fact, she is as bad as he is."

"Pshaw, George!" again interrupted Charles, "you are foolishly prejudiced against her, too. But, go on with your story and tell me about Julia."

"At last," continued Howard, "I met with William Ralston, whom you know."

"Slightly," said Charles.

"Ralston is a good fellow, in the main. And in the course of our conversation, Ralston disclosed to me a great secret, an astonishing secret in regard to Julia."

"Do tell it plainly, for heaven's sake, George, without more ado."

"I will, and will try to use, as nearly as possible, Ralston's own words. And here I must ask Mrs. S.'s pardon, if I tread upon delicate, or rather indelicate, ground. But my motive will soon be apparent; and, besides, Mrs. S. has been wife and mother, a woman of experience, and, most of all, a member of the Rosine Association. "One night," said Ralston to me, "as I was walking hastily through a street of bad repute, I encountered a veiled, disguised female figure descending cautiously the steps of a notorious house. I had seen this same figure before under similar circumstances, and I had formed a suspicion in regard to its identity. But I had always dismissed this suspicion from my mind as utterly wild and impossible. But it would come back—and this night it proved to be truth. The veiled, disguised female figure was no other than Miss Julia Witherson."

"Julia Witherson!" cried Charles, in an indescribable tumult of emotion, of wonder, anger, fear, horror, shame

and sorrow. "Julia Witherson! What new agony am I now to bear?"

"Miss Witherson!" exclaimed the mother—her mind struggling with a variety of feelings—"can I hear aright?"

"Yes," continued the clergyman, who seemed rather maliciously to enjoy the consternation of his companions; but perhaps in this we are mistaken. "Yes, Ralston assured me that this figure was Julia Witherson. He followed it, and was rendered still more certain. Yes, it is too true. The rich, talented, accomplished, religious Julia was thus and then beheld under the most suspicious circumstances!"

"Why do you thus torture me?" cried Charles, "do you not know that I love this woman? Why do you thus bring me, as it were, to the very brink of hell?"

"It is because I know that you love her that I have told you this. It is because I am about to show you a glimpse of heaven that I have thus brought you to the very verge of hell!" replied Howard.

"For God's sake explain yourself! Tell me *what* it is you mean."

"I mean simply this, that although Julia was thus seen in the most suspicious places, it was for a most auspicious and holy purpose. *Why*, think you, did she enter by stealth the dens of infamy, thus risking her reputation? *Why*, think you, did she associate with the vilest and most degraded of her sex; creatures of whom no other virtuous woman would even so much as think; women despised by men and abandoned by heaven itself? *Why* did she do all this? I will tell you. It was for a purpose worthy of an angel—a purpose such as actuated a Howard, or a Fry. It was with the design of reforming these wretches. You may think her design an Utopian one, but it was, at least, noble, and she succeeded in it. Yes, Julia, to my own certain knowledge, has brought many a poor Cyprian of our streets to repentance and to virtue. She has accomplished this by almost supernatural displays of patience, prudence, generosity, courage,

love and religion. No woman who has ever lived has displayed more of these qualities. And for this great design of *personally* seeking the personal reformation of her sex, and for her sincere, courageous and successful carrying out of this plan, she deserves the honor and the gratitude of all. To most women it would have been a delicate, doubtful, dangerous task, likely to cause more scandal than profit, to do themselves more injury than good to others ; but to her it has proved a glorious success, the results of which are incalculable. I speak enthusiastically, for I feel so."

"From whence did you derive your information as to this purpose of Miss Witherson's, and her success therein ?" inquired Mrs. Singerly.

"From Ralston in the first place," replied Howard. "He knew one of the girls in the house from which he had seen Julia departing. *She* told him of Miss Witherson's purpose. She also told him of some of her acquaintances, once evil like herself, whom Julia's noble efforts had rescued from the downward path. I have myself met some of those she has preserved. And oh, madam, oh, Charles, it would do you good to hear how gratefully these poor saved creatures speak of their saviour. I tell you that Miss Witherson has conceived and executed a plan which marks her out as a *genius in goodness ;* original, bold, yet practical. True, her plan of personally visiting the haunts of evil, 'the dark places of iniquity,' and those who dwell therein, is hardly feasible to any extent in the present state of society. She was obliged to resort to many devices and shifts, disguises and stratagems to effect her purpose ; still the plan itself is the *only* one which can ever succeed to any extent in the reformation of 'erring women.' Perhaps only such women as yourself, Mrs. Singerly, can properly appreciate and understand how repulsive such a task as this must have been to such a woman as Julia Witherson ; but as a man and a clergyman I can bear witness that to no woman of whom I have ever heard or read in the annals of virtue is she inferior. Charles,

she loves you, as you know, and you should, indeed, thank God for the love of such a woman."

Our readers will bear in mind that it was from a sermon preached years ago by the Rev. George Howard that Julia derived her first practical conception of her woman-mission. It is now by the lips of this very man that she receives her meed of praise for its execution!

"Does Miss Witherson know that you have discovered this matter? Or are any others beside yourself and this Mr. Ralston aware of her singular though noble pursuit of this extraordinary scheme?" asked Mrs. Singerly.

These were woman's questions, seemingly of no importance; yet Mrs. Singerly had her reason for asking them.

Howard replied that Miss Witherson was *not* aware of his knowledge of a matter which she had never so much as hinted at to him, intimate as he had been with her, and which she had endeavored, by all means in her power, to keep a profound secret; and that with the exception of her attendant and assistant, Mary Barton, none knew or dreamt of this matter save themselves.

We need not detail the remainder of the conversation.

We have said little of Charles' emotions as he made, through the lips of his friend Howard, this second discovery of the true nobility of the woman he loved. We have said little, because words would fail to do justice to the intensity of our hero's feelings.

A few hours passed. It is night—and moonlight—and in the little, plainly-furnished room in which he has so long been confined, Charles Singerly is alone. He is lying on the settee beside the window, through which a flood of light rushes in upon him. He is thinking of the two discoveries of the past day, and of the new revelations of *her* character. He is thinking on Julia. And his thoughts take words.

"I understand all," he cries. "I understand thee, Julia. I can see thee as thou movest like a thing of light, pure as these moonbeams, amidst the foulest scenes and the vilest creatures. I

can appreciate the shocks thy refined nature must have received amidst such associations. I can understand how often thy woman's delicacy must have been outraged. Yet thou didst persevere—for the sake of thy own sex, for the sake of heaven, aye, for *my* sake—mine, unworthy as I am. For thou didst hope to render thyself, as thou wouldst phrase it, more worthy to be my mother's daughter, by means of this good work and grand atonement. Oh, thy course has, indeed, been 'onward and upward,' while I have done nothing. Truly, 'tis *I* who am not worthy thee, my Julia. Generous, original, noble, *virtuous* girl! thou hast touched even my mother's heart of prejudice. I know thou hast, though my mother has said nothing. But I saw it in her face. She cannot resist thee now. And then thy glorious generosity! Thy offer of one-half thy fortune to a beggar! Ah! surely my mother cannot resist *this* too. And, more than all, thy modesty, thy silence, thy secresy, thy desire and endeavor to remain unknown in all thy goodness and in all thy charity. Ah! surely, mother, this must conquer even thee! Ah! thou wilt yield, withdraw thy ban, and bless us. Oh! I *do* hope! After all, it is very sweet to live when there is one like thee to live for, Julia. Oh! I feel now thy words were true. I shall *not* die, and we shall meet again—on earth—to part no more forever. My God, I thank thee for this hope. Oh, bring it, I beseech thee to fruition!"

And amidst the moonbeams he dreams of Julia.

CHAPTER VI.

A BATTLE IN A SOUL.

Mrs. Singerly's sentiments in regard to the subject-matter of the important conversation with the clergyman, related in our last, would be difficult to define. At first, they were in a state of chaos; but, in the course of a few hours, her ideas assumed a certain degree of order and definite consistency.

In regard to the one hundred thousand dollars, her thoughts ran thus:

As far as Mr. Shiner, from whom Miss Witherson's property came, had owed any moneys to her late husband, so far she (Mrs. S.) *might*, possibly, accept aid from Shiner's representative, Miss Witherson. But this debt must be first *proved* legally; and then its *exact amount* must be ascertained. But as to accepting any money, as a gift, or under any pretence, from Miss Witherson herself, personally, the thing was not to be thought of. It was noble to offer the money; it would be degrading to accept it. Besides, under the peculiar relations which Miss Witherson sustained to Mrs. Singerly and her son, the idea of accepting this magnificent donation was still more wild, and more debasing. No; she must decline for herself and her son this most generous aid—decline it most gratefully, but, also, most decidedly. And Mrs. Singerly immediately put her thoughts into execution. She wrote her ideas on this matter in the shape of a respectful, grate ful, but decided and proud letter, directed the epistle to—

"Miss Julia Witherson,
"(Care of —— Russel, Esq.,)
"New York City, N. Y.,"

and sent it to its destination. And all this before saying a word to her son, Charles, on the matter.

With respect to the second discovery in regard to Julia, communicated to her by Howard (her scheme of womanly redemption), Mrs. Singerly thought, as most orthodox, steady-going people would think, that it was very wild, strange, delicate, doubtful, dangerous. But, on the other hand, it was just what one would expect from the bold, original woman who had confessed her errors, as Julia had confessed them. And it was undeniably a noble, holy, and most virtuous undertaking, proving that she who had undertaken it was a woman of a high stamp of soul. All the prejudice in the world could not hinder Mrs. Singerly from acknowledging *this much*, at least.

When she next visited her son, Mrs. Singerly told him of the letter which she had just sent to Miss Witherson in regard to the money.

Now we, all of us, know that Charles was not mercenary; we know that he would not willingly receive a pecuniary favor from any one; and yet we must confess that he seemed disappointed, or vexed, when his mother told him of this letter and its contents. But, perhaps, it was because he deprecated the cold, formal wording of the epistle, or because he knew what pain their refusal to accept her generous gift would cause to Julia.

But when he alluded to Julia's glorious career as the reformer of her sex, and when his mother seemed desirous to subdue or moderate his admiration, he, Charles, could restrain himself no longer.

"Mother," he cried, "mother, I tell you God never gave a greater soul to any woman than that which animates Julia. So loving, so patient, so bold, so generous, and so pure. Aye, *pure*. I say the word, mother—I, who know all. Has she not repented? Has she not atoned? Is not her virtue at least as free from stain as my own? Is she not, at the lowest rate, equal in chastity to the major part of women? If she has fallen lower, has she not also risen higher? Is she not far more chaste in *soul* than the most of *her* sex, or of *mine*? If she had been a man, and had sinned, and repented, and atoned, as she has done, would she not have been for-

given ? Should she not be more readily pardoned then, as she *is but a woman* ? Is she not pure in the sight of God ? She loves me —you know how truly. I love her—you know how fondly. I tell you, mother, that neither of us can live much longer apart from the other ? Is she not as worthy to be my wife as I am to be her husband ? Ah ! mother mine, ask your *heart* these questions, not your head ! We have been patient ; does not our patience claim its due reward ? We have waited long, oh ! how long, for your blessing—is it not coming at the last ? Do not mistake *prejudice* for *principle !* She has erred, humanly ; but she has atoned divinely. Ah ! my mother, if God were to judge me as harshly as thou judgest my Julia, where, O where would be thy Charles ? She is pure, and I am passionate ; we love truly, and our true love must conquer at the last. Wilt thou not bless us in it, oh, my mother ?"

* * * *

It is night. And the silence of that period has fallen upon earth. The sky is clouded, though a star here and there peers through the mantle of the dark, and the light of the moon is veiled.

And in the quiet Virginia farm-house, in her unadorned, yet comfortable chamber sits Mrs. Singerly, in thought. But her thoughts are not of a pleasant cast, or, at least, they agitate her greatly. See ! she rises, and moves to and fro uneasily. She goes to the window and looks out upon the night ; but the movement is merely mechanical. Her mind does not direct her bodily motions, but is intent upon some troublous subject.

On a rude bureau by the window is placed a lighted candle, which burns not steadily, but by fits and starts, as though it, too, were thinking upon troublous matters. Ever and anon a gust of wind from the casement bids fair to extinguish it, but the gust passes by and still the candle burns.

The night is warm—quite sultry. Perhaps there will be a storm before morning.

But whether there will be a tempest to-night or no, we know not But we are certain of one thing, which is, that a fierce

battle is raging at this very moment (not upon the Potomac or the Mississippi, not a battle where human blood flows like water, and brother meets and murders brother), but a battle of the soul, where feeling, and principle, and truth war with education, and prejudice, and habit, which is "second nature."

Yes; this plain bed-room in a plain farm-house, on this darkly-quiet summer's night, is the scene of a great and momentous battle, and the soul of Mrs. Singerly is the battle-ground.

No banners, no trumpets, no staff-officers—and yet a general engagement.

Mrs. Singerly's soul is in doubt and sore perplexity. The words of her son, Charles, those words which we have just recorded, are in her memory, and will not leave it. And her thoughts *will* dwell upon these words.

Love for her son and her son's happiness, gratitude to and admiration of Julia Witherson, a certain natural generosity, the love of truth and of nobility of soul, on the one hand; early education, long-cherished prejudices, a certain degree of obstinacy, an utter hatred of vice and those stained with it, and a certain acquired orthodoxy, on the other; these, and more than these, contend for mastery within her.

While the heavens grow darker, and the air denser, and the stars more scarce; while the little taper burns fitfully upon the bureau by the window; while Mrs. Singerly stirs uneasily in her room, let us strive to analyze the struggle in her soul.

She thinks of what Julia Witherson (the woman who loves her son, the woman whom her son loves, and whom he wishes to make his wife and *her* daughter), she thinks of what this creature once was, according to her own showing. An infidel, a holder of false views upon virtue and marriage; aye, a polluted woman. A creature who laughed at the Scriptures, and set up her own vain imaginings, or those of a deceitful philosophy, in the place of the teachings of heaven. A woman who dared shamelessly to hold a belief that wedlock, that most sacred of institutions, was but a pious, time-sanctioned *farce*. A vile creature, who had lost her personal purity; a woman whom not all the

centuries since the flood or all the purgations of earth could restore to the spotless purity which is the crown of woman. Surely it was doubtful whether forgiveness could ever be accorded to such a wretch ; and most surely forgiveness, even if accorded, could never bring oblivion. And such a creature to become her Charles' wife, her daughter ! Impossible. The world would cast such a woman as this, when discovered, beyond its pale ; and rightly, justly ; its safety and respectability demanded it.

And suppose that, in the course of time, Julia Witherson's early error *was* discovered ; this *might* chance—a casual word, after the lapse of years, might do the work ; why, then, what a disgraceful doom were hers ! The world never forgives such a sin as this. And a woman *thus* situated, to become her daughter, and the wife of her son ! Impossible. Abominable ! Heaven itself, in its infinite mercy, could scarcely forgive such a sinner ; how could she, whose powers were but finite, ever go further than heaven itself, and not only forgive, but love, honor, and reward ? Beside, *could* such a woman as this *truly* repent and truly reform ? Could such a reformation and repentance be *lasting* ? Could such a creature make a *good wife* ? a *good mother* ? The very question seems most bitterly absurd. Besides, a man married, joined for life, to a woman who has once erred, cannot be long happy with her. Passion, at first, may reconcile him ; but as love fails with years, memory awakes and suspicion begins.

Such thoughts as these (and many kindred thoughts in the same strain, which will suggest themselves to our readers, if they will but imagine themselves in Mrs. Singerly's present mental position) rush to her mind, with almost overwhelming force. And her determination is made. Come what, come may, she will never give her consent to the union of her son Charles to Julia Witherson.

The battle has been going on fiercely. But the victory seems now to be in favor of the enemy. Early education, the prejudices of a stern, relentless orthodoxy, and the dictates of worldly knowledge and suspicion, seem to be triumphant.

Come, Julia! come, Charles! bury your dead—your killed hope—slain trust; bury these. The conflict is over. And the Providence of Fate and the artillery of Argument have decided against you.

Yes, the battle is over, the victory is won, and that unseen battle-field, the soul of Charles' mother, is comparatively quiet. And Mrs. Singerly goes to the window and looks out on the night. It is her custom so to do immediately before retiring, and she intends to retire shortly. She looks out. The heavens are darker than they were a half an hour ago; the stars have disappeared; all is dark, as is the lonely fate of Charles and Julia. And a sudden gust of wind, more violent than usual, blows out with a whiff the little taper upon the bureau, and all within and without is utter darkness. Typical, sadly typical, of your lot, ye hapless, ever-to-be-severed lovers, who must ever love, yet ever love in vain.

Mrs. Singerly closes the window and re-lights the taper, and is about to retire, when suddenly the passionate words of her son Charles rush to her memory with redoubled force. "God never gave a greater soul to any woman than that which animates Julia Witherson." "If she has fallen lower, has she not also risen higher?" "If she had been a man, would she not have been forgiven?" "Is she not pure in the sight of God?" "I tell you that neither of us can live much longer apart from the other." "Do not mistake prejudice for principle. She has erred humanly, but she has atoned divinely. Oh, if God were but to judge us as harshly as thou judgest Julia." "We love truly, and our true love must conquer at the last." She remembered these words most vividly, and a sudden, irresistible instinct told her that these passionate words were simply truth.

The battle has recommenced with more fierceness than ever. Ah, Charles! ah, Julia! Do not bury your dead yet. Hope, the victory may yet be yours and Love's!

The taper burns brightly, especially in contrast to the thick, surrounding darkness. And a peal of thunder is heard in the distance. The storm is coming up. But Mrs. Singerly heeds

neither taper or tempest. She is intent upon the thoughts that *will* force a passage into the depths of her soul.

She thinks aloud. "I know that *she*, that Julia, whatever were her former doubts as to religion, is *now* a true and practical Christian. So the Rev. George Howard has often assured me; and others also. I know, also, that her views of marriage and of chastity have altogether changed, and that her present sentiments on these points are most correct and womanly; and that she has truly repented of her early error I cannot if I would deny. She has shown it in a hundred ways, and I know she has felt it even more than she has shown it. Her noble, candid conduct to Charles; her even yet more noble and open course towards myself, cannot be too highly praised, or sufficiently wondered at for their originality of honor. How respectful she has ever been to me! how finely she refused to take advantage of Charles' affection to lead him to disobedience of my wishes! He would have married her had she given him encouragement. But no; she would not receive the son without the blessing of the mother. True pride that! Noble girl!

And then to think of her expiation and atonement! It sounds like a wild romance this story of her wanderings amongst those horrible creatures. It was a dangerous, a delicate undertaking; with almost any other woman it would have been *in*delicate and of most doubtful tendency; but she, strange being, brought good out of evil. Truly, if she has fallen lower than her sex, she has also risen above it.

How talented she is, too, and beautiful; not with the common cast of material beauty, but with the charms of soul upon her face and figure—a woman fitted physically and mentally to adorn any station; may I not say morally also? at least as regards the present and the future, if not, alas! the past. And how truly she loves my son, loves him as he deserves to be loved; and how he loves and almost worships her! Their separation seems to have rendered them but more fond. But it tells upon Charles' spirits, and on his health I

fear; and they have been so patient, so uncomplaining, and she has been so generous, so magnificently liberal, sending my boy one half of all she had in the world; and so modest, too, with all her good works and generosity; so desirous of concealment. They will never cease to love.

If such sin as hers *can* be repented of, can be atoned for, can be wiped out, then by patience, sorrow, good works candor, generosity, purity of life, soundness of views, true religion, and originality of honor and fervor of love, has she repented, atoned, and blotted out her youthful transgression.

But can such a sin be truly atoned for on this earth? *That* is the question. The world says no. Reason says no. My early education tells me no. But my heart says *yes!* Which is in the right? My worldly head or my woman's heart? May not the world be mistaken on this matter as it is on others? May not Julia Witherson, after all, having learned the horrors of sin by awful experience, make a most excellent wife and mother? May not Charles and she be happy yet, and may not I be blessed in their happiness? Had she been a man, as Charles remarked, and sinned and atoned as she has done, would she not have been forgiven? Must she lose all hope because she is a *woman*? Is there a *sex* in *sin*?

But yet our sex have greater responsibilities than men, and a more strict account is justly required of them. Is her sin pardonable? Can she, ought she to be treated as a virtuous woman when she *has been* so vile?"

And so the mother of Charles thought on for many, many minutes. Numerous other details and points of the subject, pro and con, presented themselves to her mind, as they will suggest themselves to the reader, but we will not write them here.

Love for Charles; a desire for his happiness; doubts whether this happiness would be really secured or not by his union to Julia; gratitude and admiration of Miss Witherson, combined with horror at her former life; the promptings of a naturally noble mind, and a generous heart struggling

with the suggestions of prudence, suspicion, early prejudice of education, and the dictates of a rigid conventional orthodoxy; these principles waged desperate war within the soul of Mrs. Singerly.

The battle is fiercely contested. The arguments on either side fight their ground inch by inch. Now one side gains a temporary advantage, now the other. There are no battles like the battles of the soul!

Gods! what results are hanging upon this contest! The fate of two lives; the happiness of two hearts; the success or failure of true patience and true repentance!

Charles at this moment is sleeping, and his rest is delightful. He smiles, and utters brokenly in his slumbers, exclamations of happiness, for he dreams of Julia.

And Julia, at this moment, is kneeling at her bedside praying for the happiness of her lover, and for her union with him. "Oh, God," she cries, "Thou who art love, grant that love may be triumphant!"

And while Charles sleeps and Julia prays, their fate is being decided in this quiet farm-house in Virginia, in this little plainly-furnished room, on the battle-field of a mother's soul!

The taper is burning steadily upon the bureau; it sheds now, since the casement has been closed, a mild, steady, pleasant light.

Its constant flame contrasts strongly with the darkness without. Though occasionally a flash of lightning darts across the heavens, succeeded by the booming thunder—the storm has not yet come, but it is coming.

And still the battle rages; and still it is undecided. Mrs. Singerly's face and frame partake of the agitation of her soul. She moves to and fro uneasily.

Suddenly, her eye falls upon a book which is lying on the bureau. It is her Bible, a rather large, well-bound volume. And as suddenly a strange thought strikes her. Strange, absurd, perhaps our readers may designate it, but yet similar ideas have

often occurred to the human mind, which is by nature superstitious, and have been acted upon. This strange thought is simply this : The arguments, pro and con, in relation to her extending her favor to Julia Witherson, and giving consent to her marriage with her son, are so evenly balanced that she cannot decide for herself. So she determines that the Bible shall decide for her. She will open the holy book at random, and be guided by the texts upon which her glances happen to fall, and their application to the matter in hand. By this means, as it were, heaven itself shall decide for her.

Now this may seem very strange to the reader. He or she may cry "Impossible." But we assure you that instances of this kind have been recorded in history, and that we know of some examples in our own sphere of observation.

At any rate, the idea occurred to Mrs. Singerly in a moment of great excitement, and, without debating its merits, she excitedly accepted it.

She goes to the bureau, takes from it the Bible, and opens it.

This is now the crisis of the battle. The contending hosts within her soul, breathless, await the issue !

The storm has come outside. The rain is commencing to fall, and the thunder and lightning are incessant.

But the flame of the taper pours a steady light upon the face of Mrs. Singerly, as she stands between the bureau and the window, with the Bible in her hands. Her petite, ladylike figure is bent over the book, and her expressive, though somewhat careworn face is fixed intently upon it.

Charles is still dreaming of Julia—and Julia has fallen asleep to dream of Charles.

Mrs. Singerly (raising her eyes upward with a prayer for that Divine blessing in which she devoutly, though somewhat superstitiously, believes) opens the Bible, and her glance falls upon the words of the Saviour to the woman of sin : "Neither do I condemn thee ; go and sin no more."

She closes the book, and then opens it once more at random ; and this time her eye sees the simple, memorable sentence of

Him who "spake as never man spake": "Her sins, which are many, are forgiven her; for she loved much."

The application of these two passages was evident. Mrs. Singerly understood it at once, and yielded. And the battle was over.

Love, and Repentance, and Generosity, and Atonement were triumphant; and Prejudice, and bigoted Orthodoxy, and Obstinacy departed.

It storms still. But what of that! The conflict of the elements may continue; but the conflict of the soul is over.

Mrs. Singerly reverently lays down the Bible, and retires for the night; and then extinguishes the taper; and only the glare of the lightning occasionally and fitfully illumines the apartment.

But Mrs. Singerly smiles to think how happy she will cause her Charles to be to-morrow, and what bliss she will bestow on Julia, and how they both will bless her. And with this smile upon her face, she falls asleep.

Julia Witherson is pure in God's sight. But she cannot be more pure than thee, thou holy, loving mother of our hero. With all thy innocent bigotry, thou art a glorious woman. And may the Judge of all flesh be as merciful to thee as thou hast this night resolved to be to her, our heroine, so "erring," yet so "noble"!!

CHAPTER VII.

HOW A MOTHER CAN BLESS A SON.

THE storm has passed away. It is a lovely morning. The birds sing more deliciously than is their wont. The sky is as clear as though it had never known a cloud. The thunder and lightning are succeeded by sweet sounds and sunlight. And Charles Singerly awakes from his sleep and his dreams of Julia.

He feels better this morning than he has felt for weeks, both in body and in mind. He hopes—yes, absolutely. And his hope makes him strong.

When his mother enters his apartment to pay him her usual morning visit, he receives her warmly, with a kiss, with a smile, and with a blessing.

And his mother smiles upon him, kisses and blesses him in return.

"How did you rest last night, my child?" she asks.

"Oh, capitally. And I had such delightful dreams, mother."

"Did not the storm disturb you?"

"It awoke me, mother. But I went to sleep and dreamt again."

"And of what or of whom did you dream, my son?"

"Of *her*, mother—of *her*!"

"It is of her that I would now take this opportunity to speak, my boy. Listen to me, Charles."

"On this subject, mother, I would listen to you forever."

"Pardon me if part of what I say sounds harsh. But, Charles, you know what SHE *once was*—irreligious, radical, impure in thought and deed."

"Oh, my mother, why will you recall so bitterly the wretched past?"

"Simply, that while it is yet fresh in your recollection, you may give me a solemn answer to a solemn question."

"And this question is"—

"Do you honor and respect her? *Can* you honor and respect her as a man should honor and respect his wife? Is her past so blotted out by her noble repentance, and atonement, and true ove that you will no more remember it against her? With the knowledge of her past sins, can you love and honor her as though she had not sinned at all? I have asked you this question before; but I now ask it with a purpose, solemnly, and for the last time."

"And solemnly, as in the sight of heaven, I answer yes, dear mother. Yes, I honor and love her *even more* than if she had not sinned, so sincere has been her repentance, so wonderfully glorious her atonement. Her present is spotless; her future will be stainless."

"Do you love her, love her as a man should love a woman, with all your heart and mind, and soul, and strength? I ask this question, also solemnly, with a purpose, and for the last time."

"And again I answer, as in the sight of heaven, *yes*. I love *her* as my father loved *you*, dear mother. I love her as I love yourself—with a different but as great a love. She is your only rival in my heart. I love her; I ever have loved her since the moment I met her; I love her for her beauty, her mind, her heart, her soul; I love her for her truth, her candor, her generosity, her nobility, her pride, her honor; I love her because she so *loves* me."

"You love her truly now. Will your affection *last*, my son?"

"Ah, mother, you asked that question unawares. How can love be true unless it be lasting? Mother, do you think I shall ever cease to love you?"

"No, my son."

"Neither shall I ever cease to love her. Though I live until the day of judgment, still should I love her. You may see best

to forbid, and thereby prevent our union. We do not blame you, mother. We do but grieve. But whether united or not, we do and ever must love."

"You would be happy if she were your wife?"

"Oh, this is cruel, mother. To ask me if I would be happy with the woman whom you forbid me to marry! Oh, God! would I not be blessed with her? Heaven itself could have no greater bliss to offer than to be evermore with God and Julia."

"And you think she loves you?"

"*Think* she loves me! How strangely you talk, dear mother. What is the matter with you this morning? *Think*—mother, do you merely *think* that the sun is shining? Do you merely *think* that the birds are singing? Do you merely *think* I love you? If so, then do *I* only *think* that Julia Witherson loves me. Mother, she has *proved* her love for me unmistakably in many ways, and you know it. But for what do you ask me such questions as these this morning—questions to which you know there can be but one answer? Why do you ask them so earnestly?

"I have a reason, which you will know shortly."

"A reason—know shortly—can it be that you have re—oh, God, can it be that?"

"But think, Charles—were I to withdraw my refusal to your marriage?"

"Withdraw your refusal—oh, mother!"

"Could you take her to your arms, knowing that before she saw you, *she had yielded?* Could you call her joyfully at the altar, 'wife,' knowing at the time that her betrayer lived, aye, might be within hearing, of your nuptial benediction?"

"Why torture me thus, mother? Oh, horrible, horrible!"

"But, alas! is it not true, my son? Can your love endure even such a test as this?"

"Aye, mother," cried Charles, after a brief but severe mental struggle—daguerreotyped on his expressive face. "I love her not for what she has been, but for what she is, and for what she will be. I, too, have sinned—she will have to forgive me, as I

do her. And so generous, so liberal, so gloriously self-sacrificing has she been! Do you forget, mother, that she offered unto us one-half of her fortune when she heard of our affliction? Do you forget that she has always loved and honored *you*?"

"No, my son, I do not forget all this. You believe, then, Charles, that she is a good and pure woman?"

"As I believe that God is just, I do."

"You believe that you will be unhappy without her, most happy with her?"

"As I believe that sunlight makes summer, I do."

"You think that she will make you a true wife, and be a faithful mother to your children?"

"I know it, mother. But why, oh, *why* these questions? why thus put me through the catechism of my heart?"

"You wish to know *why* I ask you these questions?"

"Yes, dear mother; yes—why inquire of me so closely in regard to my feelings towards one from whom you have banished me forever?"

"Perhaps this banishment is only *temporary*, Charles."

"Only temporary! Did you say 'temporary,' mother?"

And Charles' voice had a thrill in it, as though he were a criminal under sentence of death, asking if he were indeed forgiven.

"Yes, my son; that was the very word I used," replied Mrs. Singerly, with a smile.

"Ah, you smile. Oh, God! mother, a glorious idea occurs to me, which makes the blood all rush to my heart in ecstacy. You will not banish us forever. You will not always separate us. You will forgive her. She will become your daughter. God bless you, mother."

And Charles, who had been lying upon the settee, now started up and embraced, in strong emotion, his mother, who was seated by his side.

"Nay, my son, moderate your transports, and listen to me, calmly."

"Oh, mother, how *can* I be calm on such a subject?"

"Well, at any rate, lie down again on your settee. Lie down, or else you will be sick again, and I will not speak a word further to you on this matter."

"I am still as death," cried Charles, evidently as restless as he well could be, though he "went through the motion" of lying down again on the settee.

"You may have thought me stern, harsh, unforgiving, thus far, Charles," continued his mother.

Here she was interrupted by her son, who again rose and again embraced her, as he emphatically protested against the idea that he had ever deemed his mother to be anything of the sort she had just mentioned. When this diversion was over, Mrs. Singerly resumed as follows:

"But I have been actuated in all that I have done, in every act of my life, by two motives—the desire to do right, and the wish to contribute to what I honestly considered your real happiness. Do you believe this, Charles?"

"No, I do *not* believe it," was the unexpected reply.

"*What*, Charles!" cried Mrs. Singerly, in the utmost astonishment.

"No, I do not believe it, mother, for I do more, much more—I know it—I will take my oath to it."

"Ah, I knew you did but jest; but be serious for a moment, darling."

"Oh, I feel too happy to be serious, mother; I *hope*, and hope is paradise."

"Descend to earth awhile and listen to me as I briefly state to you my history, as it were—the history of my change of views on several important matters since I first met *her*."

"*Her* who is to be my *wife*, your daughter, is it not so?"

"It may be so, Charles."

"Ah, I feel sure of it now. Oh, heavens! I am just beginning to live."

"When I was young, Charles," said Mrs. Singerly, "I was taught to look upon what is called 'dissipation' in men as an unpardonable offence. As to the slightest breach of even exter-

nal decorum in women, I learned to look upon it with horror. And as to positive error in a female, *that* was something so abominable, that I was taught to rank it with murder and atheism. I married your father chiefly because he had never been 'wild,' and was, therefore, in my eyes, the model of a man. As you grew up, I saw with sorrow your tendency to dissipation; but as I knew your noble nature, I was forced to confess, from your example, that 'dissipation' was *not* the unpardonable offence I deemed it, since, as in your case, it was associated with many noble qualities. My views, therefore, on this subject, were modified; they changed and became more liberal, and I think more just. But still my unvarying detestation and horror of female license remained unchanged. I was right on this point, but as I have since learned, *I carried my righteousness too far*. Impurity is a sin, and a great one; but *like all other sins*, it may be forsaken, repented of and atoned for. And as *God* forgives all transgressions which are truly repented of, so should *man* and *woman* forgive. These truths I have learned lately; spite of the prejudices, I may say bigotry, of my early education, I have learned these truths well. And *she* has been my teacher. *She*, with her truthfulness, her noble, most original candor, her true pride, her generosity, her love, her true repentance, her religious conversion, her magnificent atonement, proves her sorrow for her error, and demands man's forgiveness of it. She, in short, is '*erring, yet noble.*'"

"Erring, yet noble," repeated Charles. "Dear mother, you have learned to know her at the last, to comprehend her and to do her justice. Kiss me, my mother," and the pair embraced. And still Charles kept repeating, as though there were some magic in them, the words, the three words, "Erring, yet noble." Suddenly he started up and cried, "And now, mother, as you have discovered what she is, what is to be the *result* of your discovery?"

"Your happiness, my son," replied his mother. "I consent to your union with her, whom now we name for the first time during our present conversation—with Julia Witherson. She shall be your wife. She shall be my daughter."

"God in heaven bless you, oh, my mother! I am too happy to say more."

And with these simple words, uttered in a tone of indescribable bliss and tenderness, Charles wound his arms around his mother, and kissed her repeatedly; and each kiss spoke eloquently of his love, his gratitude, and his ecstacy. His heart was on his lips. Throughout the wide, wide world, from India to the Pole, there lived no happier man than he. *She* was vindicated; the woman he loved had justice done her at the last by the one of her own sex he prized most; the woman he loved was to be his forever, his honored wife. He had waited, he had been obedient and patient, and now his reward was come in his mother's blessing.

It had stormed the night before, but the day was now clear. So his tempest of the heart was over, and his sky of hope was now unclouded. The birds sang gaily. But the music in his heart was sweeter than the songs of all the warblers in creation.

He reclined on the settee by the open window, with the sunlight smiling o'er him, the glorious prospect opening to his sight, the balmy breeze laughing lightly about him; with his arms around his mother, unutterably happy.

His friend Howard entered, and Charles cried joyously:

"George, my mother has given me paradise for life—she has withdrawn her refusal. Julia and I are to be man and wife; we are both to be her children, and your parishioners. And you shall be the priest at a certain wedding that I know of. Here, George, come and thank my mother, in my name, yours, Julia's, and her own, for making us all four so happy. And I am well now and strong, and rich, and great in my happiness, and am in love with the whole world. God bless you! oh, God bless you, oh, my mother!"

CHAPTER VIII.

"HEAVINESS MAY ENDURE FOR A NIGHT, BUT JOY COMETH IN THE MORNING."

Let us leave Virginia for a while, and betake ourselves to the good city of the Knickerbockers.

Julia Witherson is seated in her luxuriously-furnished room, in her uncle's house. It is the same room in which, years ago, we saw her one cold, dismal evening in the month of March, musing sadly over her then recent separation from Charles.

The appearance of the apartment has been much improved since that time; entirely new and very costly furniture has been added to its attractions, and the old book-case has been replaced by a very elaborately-carved affair of the most modern style, filled with the choicest books. Several new and elegant paintings grace the walls, and altogether the room has a most charming appearance.

Prominent on the table, in the centre of the room, near which table Julia is seated, is a handsomely-bound volume of Charles Singerly's poems. And near the book is a daguerreotype, at which our heroine is at this moment intently gazing. Need we say it is the miniature of Charles?

Our heroine is sad to-day, sad as she was that eve in March to which we have just alluded, and from the very same cause, her separation from the man she loves.

It is true that it is a very dismal morning. It has been raining incessantly since an early hour, and the constant patter of the rain is very dreary. But it is not the weather that has affected our heroine's spirits, it is her own wretchedness.

And yet she looks most beautiful to-day. Pale, yet charming; sad, yet most captivating. Her rich, dark, glorious hair floats with a careless abandon over her shoulders; her proud form is bowed gracefully over the miniature of her lover; her dark eyes beam tenderly as they almost devour, with fondness, the painted features of the man she worships, and her face is full of soul.

There are the elements of strong contrasts about this sketch—the splendor within; the dreariness without; the beauty, the sumptuous elegance, and the sorrow.

The morning hours rolled on. For a while Julia gazed at the portrait of her lover; then with a sigh she turned to her usual wild, abstract studies, to which she devoted a portion of her every day. She tried to banish all human feeling in the mazes of scholastic abstraction; but in vain; the image of her lover seems stamped upon every page.

She then called in Mary Barton, pretty, curly-haired and amiable. With her Julia conversed on various matters appertaining to the household, for, spite of her studies, our heroine was a capital and efficient "house-keeper." She also commissioned her attendant with various errands and messages to several of those women whom she herself had, at various times, rescued from vice and infamy. For our heroine did not content herself with merely *saving* women; she *kept them saved.* She watched over them during their reformatory career, and gave them both material and spiritual aid and comfort; nor did she allow her personal sorrow to interfere with this work. And so Mary Barton was, this morning, charged with various commissions of mercy, which were to be attended to at once, despite the weather. And Mary gladly obeyed; first, because she loved her work; secondly, because she so dearly loved and so truly honored Julia, her own preserver.

Our heroine also conversed with Mary concerning various schemes of charity, to the practical exemplification of which she was devoting much time, energy and money. Besides

wholly supporting many worthy, but poor and infirm men and women, Julia was interested in various benevolent associations, and was constantly doing good. She felt responsible to man and to God for the right use of her great wealth, and she endeavored faithfully to make it the agency of blessing to all around, and especially to those peculiar friends of heaven, the despised of earth, the poor and the needy ; and, therefore, we think that our heroine's natural extravagance, her love for elegance and comfort, etc., was perfectly excusable. If she was liberal to others, certainly she had a right to be liberal to herself.

And we may here remark that, though we have had no opportunity of beholding our heroine in what is called "domestic life," her *home-virtues* were numerous. She was not one of those beings whose good traits are never to be seen in their own houses, but one of the diametrically opposite sort. Her relations with her aunt, uncle, niece and nephew, with whom she lived, her conduct to her servants, was of the most exemplary disposition. She was tenderly beloved by all who knew her intimately. They might think her somewhat strange, but they knew her to be loving and true ; and when your *intimates* have this opinion of you, reader, rejoice and be exceeding glad. She had been a faithful daughter; she was now a dutiful niece, an amiable relative, a true, warm-hearted friend, a noble, truth-loving, truth-telling, generous woman.

After Mary Barton's departure Julia endeavored to resume her studies, but in vain, she could not concentrate her mind upon them. She then left the room, and, entering the parlor, opening her favorite piano, played upon it sweetly, plaintively, divinely. Oh ! if the ghost of old Shiner could but have heard her ! But, suddenly, in the midst of a most delicious passage, she remembered that her aunt had complained this morning of a slight headache, and upon the instant our heroine ceased her melody, though she was now interested in it, lest the noise should, in any way, disturb her aunt. This

was a slight incident, but it showed character, self-command, and true kindness of heart, even in little things!

Next door to Julia's home there lived a very brilliant and fashionable young lady, who was, at the present moment, wishing for a companion of her own age to pass away with her the rainy hours. Miss Witherson might have paid a visit this morning to her neighbor, who was intimate with the family, and been entertained with scandal; but our heroine relished not this kind of entertainment. She was too fond of truth to love gossip; she was too kind-hearted to hear scandal, and too proud to debase herself by uttering it; consequently our heroine was *not* very popular in general "society," so called; she was also averse to it; she had been gay once, but for years had lived a retired life. Besides, as our heroine was very proud, she regarded herself, and justly, as the superior in mind and soul of the majority of "women of fashion," and she did not, as a rule, associate with her inferiors; so she did *not* to-day call upon her neighbor, but, closing the piano, returned to her room.

Oh! how dismally it was raining! The patter of the drops upon the roofs was ceaseless—and so dreary. It was not a thunder-shower, but a continuous storm unrelieved by any excitement. It was dark, too; quite dark. Few persons could be seen in the streets, all animals had taken shelter, out-door business was suspended; and, seated by the table in the centre of the apartment, Julia thinks in sorrow upon her love.

She takes a letter from her pocket, and re-reads it for the twentieth time. It is the letter Mrs. Singerly wrote to her, refusing her generous offer of one hundred thousand dollars to herself and son, though at the same time thanking her for it in most grateful terms. Still it is a formal letter; Julia reads in every line of it that the writer's prejudices have not yet been conquered; that she still looks upon the one to whom it is addressed as unworthy to become the wife of her son. Yes, Julia feels that Charles' mother is still an obstacle to their union, which she fears can never be removed.

And so she must live a lonely life, and die, at last, a lonely death. God help her! She can never know the luxury of being a loved and honored wife; she can never call a man by the name of "husband." No children shall "rise and call her blessed." None of the sweet, domestic heart-ties of a home of her own can ever be felt by her. She must love—still love and keep on loving—but never reach fruition. Others who love, with not half her purity or fervor, will wed and be happy; she must witness their bliss, but never share it. Her vivid fancy pictures the joys of married life, the ecstacy of love, the sweets of tender smiles and kisses. And then her fancy paints the dark, dreary loneliness of *un*wedded life, no kisses, no smiles, no husband, no children—one dull routine of duty—plenty of work for the body, much occupation for the soul, but nothing, nothing, nothing for the heart. The first might have been, but cannot be; the last should not have been, but is to be.

"And yet," cried she, in her sorrow, as though she were addressing some unseen judge, "I do not merit such a gloomy fate as this. True, I *have* sinned" (and she shuddered as she remembered how she *had* sinned), "but I was very young, and he who tempted me was very cunning. I have repented, heaven knows, in dust and ashes, and for many years, for this, my early error. I have led, since then, a life as pure and spotless in thought, word and deed, as the most virtuous of my sex. I have atoned, as few sinners have ever atoned upon this earth. I have loved, as few women have ever loved. Am I *never* to be forgiven? Is my sin ever to be remembered against me? Cannot a present and a future redeem a past? It is cruel. It is unjust. I have *not* deserved my fate."

And as she spoke these words, she rose to her feet; her magnificent form surpassed itself in graceful pride. Her large, dark eye flashed at the injustice of her sentence; she threw her head back, with its wealth of dark hair, and arched her superb neck; while her intellectual, expressive face seemed to look defiance to fate.

But her mood soon changed. She took the true view of her position.

"God forgive me, for my proud and foolish words," she cried, throwing herself passionately upon her knees beside the table. "I have deserved and more than deserved, all the punishment I have borne and still must bear. Or if I have merited aught of reward, I have sufficiently received it in the approval of my conscience and the pardon of my God. Yes, thou Holy One, who hearest me, I feel that Thou hast pardoned me, all unworthy as I am. Thou wilt open Thy heaven for me, sinner as I have been; it is but just, then, I should endure my sorrow on the earth."

And in penitence, not pride, Julia bowed her head and heart before the Almighty One, in whom she believed.

"And yet it *is* very hard to bear, this cross of mine, my Father," she murmured. "To live, to love, to be beloved, and yet to have no joy of either life or love. Never to be *his;* to see him, to hear of him, to be near him, and yet to be as far removed as earth from heaven! Ever to hope, yet never to be blest! To strive to be worthy *of* him, yet never to be *with* him. To live together in heart, yet apart in body. To long to feel his lips pressed to mine; to yearn to hear him cry, 'My Julia, my wife!' and yet never to be his wife, his Julia! Oh, it is very, very hard, is it not, my God? I know I have deserved it all; but yet, oh Merciful One, have mercy upon me. Take me from this earth of sorrow. Take me to Thy heaven of bliss. Oh, let me die. In heaven no fate and no mothers can part us. Let me die, my Father!"

And with "a broken and a contrite heart," she looked through her streaming eyes upwards. Never, in all her life before, had she felt so utterly lonely, so utterly hopeless, so utterly wretched as now. Never before had she suffered as she suffered at this hour. Truly the retribution of her sin was fully come. Her early error was expiated now if never before. This was her time of agony, her dark hour. It is only in such seasons as this that the human soul can form an idea of the Sacred Agonies of the Garden of Gethsemane!

And still it rained on—and still the day was dismal—and the

dreary patter of the rain-drops ceased not. And in her splendidly furnished room, with all the appliances of luxury and intellect around her, with her costly robe around her magnificent form, and her face beautiful as that of Guido's Magdalene, Julia knelt in her great sorrow. And her eyes fall upon her lover's poems and her lover's portrait, lying on the table beside her, and she kisses them passionately.

* * * * * * * *

When Charles learned from his mother's lips that she, at last, consented to his union with Julia, his first impulse was to write immediately to the woman of his heart a passionate epistle, explaining all that had occurred, and begging her, spite of etiquette, or aught else in the world, to come to him at once. But hearing that Julia's relative, the woman who rented from our heroine the farm-house in which he had, for so many weeks, been confined, was about to write to Julia urging her presence on pecuniary matters, he abandoned this idea, intending to *surprise* Julia with her joy upon her arrival; thus turning a visit of business into a visit of bliss.

This being premised, let us return to Julia.

A day or two after the rainy morning, whose sorrows we have above described, our heroine, who was still melancholy, not yet recovered from her depression, received a note from her Virginia relative requesting her immediate presence on an important matter. She glanced eagerly over the epistle to see if there was any mention made of *him*, the man she loved; but not one word did it contain on this subject, it was merely a dry business letter; and feeling very unlike business in her present condition, our heroine threw down the missive with a sigh. "I will not go," she thought. "Why should I? It will be so painful to meet him again, and then to part. Why harrow his soul and mine by another fruitless interview? Why merely see and hear him for a moment? or, worse, be near him and yet *not* see or hear him. And his mother, I will not encounter her again. My agent

will attend to all pecuniary matters better than I can myself. I will remain."

And then, having determined that it was best, on all accounts, both for herself and her lover, that she should *not* go, woman-like she straightway took a whim into her head that *go she would.* And she went.

* * * * * * * *

Julia arrived at the Virginia farm-house, attended to the matter of business on which she had been summoned, and received a message that Mrs. Singerly requested the honor of an interview with her in her son's apartment. Wondering what the meaning of this message might be, she obeyed the summons, and entered the room designated.

It was very plainly furnished, thus presenting a great contrast to the luxurious apartment in which we saw Julia upon a rainy morning not long ago.

The day itself was a perfect contrast to the dreary day of storm to which we have just alluded. Instead of the patter of rain-drops, was to be heard through the open window the songs of the birds ; instead of a sky of clouds, there was to be seen a blue heaven of bright sunshine.

But Julia Witherson was just as beautiful, and almost as sad now in the midst of the sunlight as she was then in the midst of the storm. Before her reclined on the settee the man she loved—Charles Singerly, the poet ; Captain Singerly, the patriot. There he is, the man of her heart, with his classic face (which to-day seems strangely happy, though, as it were, with a concealed happiness), and his fine eye (which looks upon her now with such a singular expression), and his exquisite mouth (over which flits a smile), while his elegant form is attired as though for a holiday. "Can he be happy?" she asks her heart. "Can he be happy, when we are parted and I am wretched?" But, whether he be happy or no, *there he is*, not many feet from her, yet removed out of reach as truly as though he were in the wild, strange, far-off country of Japan.

Near her son stands Mrs. Singerly (who has risen to receive

her), the petite, lady-like, reserved-looking mother of her lover, the mother who loves her not, and who has parted her from her love forever. Mrs. Singerly seems somewhat agitated at our heroine's entrance, but soon recovers her usual polite formality of manner. As for Julia, she patiently waits what is to be said to her; but in her own mind she resolves never to rack her heart vainly by meeting Charles again, at any rate in his mother's presence.

"Will you not be seated, Miss Witherson?" said Mrs. Singerly.

Prosaic enough, truly. And Julia complies with her request, saying, however, "Pardon me, madam. But, as I am not well to-day, may I ask, without offence, that our interview be as brief as possible?"

And here again she noticed upon the lips of her lover a smile, as though of amusement, at the idea of her wishing the present interview to be a brief one. And she asked herself if there was aught so strange in this desire. Was it likely she could wish it to be a *long* one?

"I have requested the honor of your company, Miss Witherson, in order that my son, who cannot yet leave his apartment, and myself might have an opportunity to express to you orally, as well as in writing, our many great obligations to you for your many favors unto us."

"Nay, madam," replied our heroine, "you are mistaken. It is *I* who owe you many thanks for putting it into my power to be of any use to you."

"Allow me, Miss Witherson, notwithstanding your polite fiction, to place the matter in its true light. Myself and my son have enjoyed your hospitality for many weeks."

"Pardon me, if any thanks are due, render them to my cousin" (the relative who rented the farm-house of our heroine), "not to me—*she* is properly entitled to them."

"I *have* tendered them in that quarter. I have also tendered a more substantial payment—which, to my great surprise and regret, has been declined."

"My cousin, madam, has too much respect for friends of mine, and far too much admiration for the brave soldiers of our republic, to accept pecuniary reward for doing them a slight service. No more upon this subject, I beg of you, madam."

Our heroine did not state, however (what was the truth), that she had insisted upon her "cousin" receiving a liberal sum from herself in payment of the board, attendance, and etceteras, relating to the residence of Mrs. Singerly and son with her. But Julia was a poor hand at narrating her own good deeds, though we have seen how very candid she has been at different times in regard to her errors.

"But, Miss Witherson," said Mrs. Singerly, "there is one subject on which I *must* speak, whether you prohibit it or not. My son and myself will never rest satisfied until we tell you, personally, face to face, how very deeply, truly grateful we are, and ever will be, for your most liberal, your most wonderfully generous offer of your fortune to my son when affliction befell him. If we did not accept your most noble gift, it was not, we assure you, because we failed to appreciate, in the minutest item, the full claims of your self-denying generosity upon our admiration, and our life-long gratitude."

"Madam," cried our heroine, "if I have deserved aught at your hands in return for a trifling offer of service, you can repay me ten times over by reconsidering your determination and accepting that money—as a loan, if you will. Or if not, at least, by saying nothing more about it."

"But," continued Mrs. Singerly, "I must protest"——

"And I, madam," interrupted Julia, "must protest against any further conversation on this subject."

"Miss Witherson, allow me to ask you, do you remember one winter's afternoon, some years ago, when yourself, my son and I met, conversed, and parted, as we thought, forever? That afternoon when I learned your history, decided against you, and refused my consent to your union with my son? Do you remember that afternoon?"

Mrs. Singerly asked this abrupt question in her usual man-

ner, just as if she was making some customary, everyday inquiry.

Julia Witherson rose from her seat, in anger and astonishment. This was a question indeed, and a most singular and unnecessary one. "She asks, she, his mother, asks me if I remember that night of shame and sorrow! As though I could ever forget it! *Why* does she ask me if I remember it? Why does she ask me this question now? Why does she allude to the subject at all? Professing gratitude to me, and then straightway insulting me. For insult it is to ask this question under the circumstances. What motive can she have? Before him, too!" Such were our heroine's hasty reflections. And she looked at Charles. He did not seem agitated or annoyed, but happy and smiling—while Mrs. Singerly seemed to be possessed with some fixed purpose which she was determined to fulfill. What could it all mean?

Julia gazed, in her agitation, vaguely through the open window. The sun shone brightly on the green fields, the sky was cloudless, the birds sang deliciously. And then in a glass that hung near where she was standing, she caught a glimpse of her own intellectual, though now flushed face. But though she saw all, she noted it not. Anger, pride, wonder, filled her soul—and she answered nothing.

"Do you remember that afternoon?" again asked Mrs. Singerly.

All Julia's various emotions now concentrated themselves into pride, as she answered haughtily:

"Madam, I cannot see wherefore you ask of me, at this time, such a question. The previous tenor of your conversation did not lead me to expect such an uncalled for allusion as is contained in your interrogatory. I decline to converse with you on this subject. You do not, you cannot appreciate me." Then, changing her tone, forgetting her pride in her excitement, she cried, passionately: "Oh! why do you thus torture me? Why do you thus recall the bitter past? Why have you brought to my memory that fearful afternoon?"

"Simply to tell you," said Mrs. Singerly, with a smile, "that were it possible that afternoon could come again, *I* should act very differently. I should *not* decide against you; I should *not* refuse my consent."

"*What* do you say, madam?" cried Julia, in amazement, doubting if she had heard aright.

"Do you not understand her?" cried Charles, eagerly, now speaking for the first time during the interview, and addressing himself to Julia. "Do you not understand *our* mother?"

"*Our* mother!" repeated Julia.

"Yes," said Charles. "My mother *and yours*. I cannot keep you and myself in suspense any longer. But we wished to surprise you with your happiness. Your true love, *your virtue*, have conquered my dear old mother's heart at last. She refuses her consent to our paradise no more. She yields. You are to be my wife, her daughter. Come to my arms, to my heart. Do you understand now?"

And in his excitement Charles, too, arose from the settee, and clasped Julia tightly, rapturously to his breast. Oh! the bliss of that long embrace! Oh! how her lover kissed her! Kissed her dark hair, kissed her broad forehead, kissed her swimming eyes, kissed her blushing cheek, kissed her superb lips, while his arm encircled her waist, as though he feared that she might elude his grasp like some angelic vision.

Oh, the rapture of that moment! It well repaid the lovers for all the agonies of their separation. Their weary days of dreaming and vain yearning; their weary nights of loneliness and sighing; these were all forgotten now, as though they had not been. Wherefore, truly, should they be remembered? Were they not together now, form to form, lip to lip, heart to heart? Were they not together now forever? If earth upon that summer's day held within its vast circumference two mortals who had borrowed for a while the bliss of heaven, these two now stood in the centre of that plainly-furnished room in that quiet Virginia farm-house, with their arms around each other, and their mother looking on. While just without the open

window sang the birds merrily, and whispered the breeze softly, and shone the sun brightly, and smiled the fields greenly.

"But come, my child, my Julia, *my daughter*, am I not to have my kiss and my embrace, too, as well as my monopolizing son?"

Could it be Mrs. Singerly, the reserved, stately mother of Charles, who spoke these light and loving words? Could it be the same woman who once banished her from her presence, who now summoned her to her embrace? Julia asked herself this question, but when she turned and saw Mrs. Singerly standing, with her arms outstretched and a sweet smile upon her expressive face, the question was answered. With a glad cry Julia, abandoning her lover, rushed into his parent's arms.

For a moment no word was spoken; but then cried Julia, all her pride departed, "Madam!"

"Nay, call me mother!"

"*Mother!*" Oh, in what an indescribable tone this word was uttered by the, till now, motherless Julia! "Mother," she cried, unconsciously using the words of Holy Writ, "I am not worthy to be called thy child—can you forgive me? I never can forgive myself. Only I will love you so—and him. Oh, God, I am so happy! But I am not worthy to be your daughter. I thought so once; but my pride is gone now."

"My child, my Julia! you are talking folly," replied her new found mother. "You are worthy to be the daughter of the chiefest princess or the best woman on earth. Ah! you have taught me, my daughter, a lesson which I shall never forget. A lesson for which I shall ever thank you."

"And this lesson, mother?" interrupted Julia.

"Is, that every human being, whether man or woman, may fall, *and rise again.* Rise *higher* than before their fall. That to no sin should forgiveness be refused, if truly repented, forsaken and atoned. That the darkest stains may often mar the noblest creatures, who are most glorious, nevertheless. This may not be the doctrine of the world, which is ever unjust, and especially to women. This may not be the doctrine of the

rigidly-bigoted orthodox, such as I once was. But it is the experience of this summer, the teaching of truth, of *your* life, my daughter, of my own heart and my own soul." Mrs. Singerly spoke these words with feeling and solemnity.

"Alas! my mother," said Julia, "spite of all your comfort, I feel that I am erring"——

"Yet noble," cried Charles. "But away with the past, my own one. It has been a brief season of cloud and storm, but we have improved the tempestuous hours, and will be all the better and the happier for them. Let us live but in the charming present, and the long, long, bright, glorious, blessed future. We are safe at last; we are in haven and in heaven—the heaven of a mutual love. See, my Julia, how nature smiles upon us! The sky is as cloudless as our hopes. Let us thank OUR MOTHER."

With one accord the lovers embraced their mother and each other simultaneously. And Mrs. Singerly felt herself more than repaid for all the self-struggles it had cost her to bring about this happy result.

One moment of silent, speechless tenderness and happiness; then the voice of Mrs. Singerly was heard, saying:

"Now let us thank OUR FATHER."

And, with one accord, the three bodies, that contained the three happiest hearts on earth, knelt down and offered up their praises unto heaven. They knelt with the rude settee for an altar. It was not an imposing shrine. But what of that? The Holy One is above all outward ceremony!

They knelt—Julia in the middle, with her hand in that of Charles' mother, and her waist encircled by the arm of Charles himself.

A charming group—emblematic both of earthly love and heavenly.

And, suddenly, the voice of Charles' mother broke the silence of the scene. "Oh, God of love!" she cried, "grant that we, who have by Thine infinite mercy been reunited, and who have, by time, separation and affliction, been taught Thy wisdom,

may ever remember Thy past lessons, and abide in our present love."

They arose, and kissed each other—and it was all over. Their probation was ended. They had entered into their reward.

* * * *

And thus, Julia Witherson realized the truth of that delicious passage of Holy Writ :

"Heaviness may endure for a night ; but joy, joy cometh in the morning."

* * * *

Nobility has been on trial, and has received a verdict in its favor.

BOOK THE SIXTH.

A MAN ON TRIAL.

CHAPTER I.

"BY THE SAD, SEA WAVES."

During the summer, an episode occurred, which, as it concerned Julia materially, though indirectly, we will take this opportunity to narrate.

The Kincarde family, since Uncle Shine's death, have been spending the most of their time at their cottage on the sea-shore. Let us go thither and look after the Kincardes—or rather, Mrs. Kincarde herself, who is *the* one of the family.

In an obscure, secluded portion of the beach, at some distance from "Shell" cottage, as the Kincarde residence was called, and almost entirely unknown to the sojourners at "Sea-side City," Mrs. Kincarde, with a singularity of taste which was one of her chief characteristics, had caused to be erected a rustic arbor and a bath-house. The arbor was a very odd affair, of considerable heighth, grotesquely ornamented, and many sided, looking somewhat like the outside frame of a gigantic kaleidoscope; while the bath-house, on the contrary, was rounded, and not unlike a small shot-tower or light-house.

They stood near together, at a distance from the sea, in a small grove, through the openings of which the ocean was plainly visible. A sort of foot-path led from these singular structures to the beach on one extremity, and to the road to Sea-side City on the other. The scenery around was very wild and desolate; a few stunted trees scattered here and there; any amount of arid sand; a few fishermen's huts in the distance—these, and the everlasting sea, with its far-off "white caps" and its white-sailed ships, with an occasional sea-bird, were all that was visible; while the only sound that greeted the ear was the murmuring voice of mighty ocean.

It was to this lonely spot that Mrs. Kincarde came, one summer's afternoon. She was alone, and seating herself in the highest or third story of the remarkable arbor just referred to, drew out her pocket-glass and surveyed the horizon. She had always been fond of the sea, fond of tales of storms and shipwreck; and she now gazed seaward, as though beholding the face of a friend, or like a land-bird, fascinated by a sea-serpent!

She is an ugly woman. Her tall, lean form is very ungraceful and most angular; her sharp features are utterly destitute of beauty; but at the same time, her grey eyes are wonderful, deep, restless, passionate, yet cold; shrewdly speculative, and strangely attractive. They are full with an unnatural light, which hardly seems of earth. And her homely, though most intellectual and *willed*, countenance has a peculiar expression upon it, which can hardly be described in words.

She is dressed in an expensive, gaudy, *outré*, tasteless style, as though she wished to be in attire, as in other points, different from the majority of her sex.

And there she sits, looking through her glass upon that mighty, restless ocean, which she loves.

For a while she gazes. Then she lays down the glass and takes up a book, which she has brought with her from the library at "Shell Cottage." As is to be expected from the sister of "Uncle Shine," the volume is a translation of one of the most dangerous works of one of the most dangerous of modern French infidels. A work in which man's belief in a God is ridiculed as the most contemptible folly conceivable; in which all religion is satirized as superstition. But as the author's views coincide with those of Mrs. Kincarde, the reader is very much delighted with her volume. And yet is it not a sad sight, that old woman, with her gray hair, defying thus the God before whom she must one day, perhaps erelong, appear? And all the time before her very eyes that great sea, which she so loves, and which He made—He, whose very existence her favorite French philosopher denies.

Yet so it is. And her breast expands with pride, as she thinks

how superior she is to the superstition of her race. She is no fool to be frightened by a God—not she !

No, truly. And yet this very independent and wise woman, who is more learned in her own conceit than Bayle, Newton, Locke, or Paul, is gross idiot enough to place implicit faith in the vagaries of Spiritualism. She does *not* believe in Christ ; but she *does* believe in rappings, knockings, mediums, spirit-circles, and all the paraphenalia of modern charlatanism.

Oh ! human nature !

Mrs. Kincarde reads for a while, then again takes up her glass and gazes seaward. But no sail is in sight. So, folding her arms, she looks thoughtfully, dreamily, upon the ocean. Her love for the sea is the only romantic or unworldly feature in her disposition ; in all other respects she is hard and practical enough ; but in her yearning admiration for the grand, old ocean she is indeed a poet.

Does the sea return her affection ? Would not the ocean overwhelm and destroy her, if it had a chance, as ruthlessly as it would overwhelm and destroy any other human being ? We fear it would. But will it ever have a chance ?

After gazing upon the ocean a while, and dreaming strange day-dreams about it, Mrs. Kincarde's attention becomes diverted to the arbor in which she is sitting. It needs some repairs, she thinks. This essentially material subject breaks the romantic current of her recent thoughts, and her mind then wanders off to various other matters. She thinks of the loss of the Shiner property, consequent on her brother's singular will, and she almost curses his memory. She also curses heartily Julia Witherson, as the recipient of the wealth that should never have been hers. But she congratulates herself that she has a life-interest in a large portion of her brother's estate. True, after her death this interest reverts to Julia Witherson, by the will of the testator. But what of that ? She will live for years ; and before her death she trusts, by legal proceedings already instituted, to be able to set the whole will of her dead brother aside.

So once more she curses Julia. But let her remember that

"curses are like young chickens, and always come home to roost."

Now she again gazes intently and lovingly upon the ocean. And suddenly she is seized with a strange but irresistible longing to plunge for a while into its waters.

Mrs. Kincarde seldom indulges in a sea-bath ; it is too strong a luxury for her feeble constitution. But there are exceptions to all rules.

The ocean is mild this afternoon ; the beach is safe ; she will remain in the water but a few minutes ; and, accordingly, her mind is resolved. Acting upon the impulse of the moment, she descends from her high position in the singularly-shaped arbor, and wends her way toward the equally odd bath-house. The bathing-robes of the family, including her own, are here kept under a lock and key, which was of Mr. Shiner's own invention, and defies picking. She will have no trouble upon this point.

It is true that hitherto, on each of the very rare occasions on which she has bathed in the ocean, she has always been attended by one of her family. But this afternoon she has conceived the whim of bathing alone and unaided. Being an obstinate woman, we need not wonder that she is now bent upon putting her whim into execution. If she had no other reason, it would suffice to her that she is determined to prove to her husband and her daughter that they are very much mistaken in their idea that she is so feeble as to be unable to take care of herself. So, as willful woman will have her way, and as there are none present to prevent Mrs. Kincarde from having hers, the odd old woman enters her round bath-house, and attires herself in her grotesque bathing-robes.

We know not how it is, but *so* it is, that while she robes her angular limbs in her sea-costume, she thinks of all the dead men who have died by the shore of the very sea into which she is now about to plunge. And with these images of horror in her mind she rushes, with a speed most unusual for her, from the bath-house to the ocean.

There are no living beings in sight. As she turns her gaze

upon the shore, she sees but a grove, through the openings of which, the many-sided arbor and the rounded bath-house are visible. Only this, and sand, and above her the clear sky, and beneath her, around her feet, the waters of the sea. She gazes upon these familiar objects intently, and for some time—why, we cannot guess; we but record the fact. And then she turns her face seaward, and advances into the deeper water. The bath is delicious! the cooling sensation is most glorious! She enjoys it to the utmost. Who says she is unable to take care of herself? Why, now she feels as though she were young again—as though she were but a girl. And in her joy she blesses the ocean and talks to its waters wildly. There are few things in life so truly delightful as a bath in the sea! It far surpasses all conceivable fresh-water bathings!

But oh, God of mercy! what is this? She has ventured out too far! She feels herself irresistibly impelled yet farther! Her limbs refuse to do their office. It is not terror that has seized upon them. No, Mrs. Kincarde is a brave woman, especially in emergencies. It is *paralysis!*—a sudden paralysis, arising, perhaps, from the reaction of the excessive exertion and excitement, which she has just undergone, perchance from other causes; we are not medical, and therefore simply record the truth.

She is being carried out to sea. She is powerless to prevent it. Horrible fate—but certain! She shrieks, but no living being hears her cries! There are many thousands of men and women not far from her—thousands who are, at this very moment, sipping their cobblers, or sailing, or fishing, or flirting in the piazzas of the hotels, or reading novels or sleeping in their rooms. Thousands who are merry—very probably on the other side of the angle of the beech, which bounds her view of the shore, there may be many bathing at this very time. But none of these men or women hear her cry; even if it was heard, help could not be brought in time to save her. She knows not how to swim; even had she the knowledge, she has not now the power; she is sinking fast; sinking into the waters; into the

sea she has loved so well ; into the sea she has gazed at from the shore for so many long hours.

More than this—she is sinking into death, into eternity ! We wonder if she is as fond of French infidels *now* as she was an hour since ? We wonder if she believes *now* in a heaven, a hell, a hereafter, and a living, tangible, just-judging God ? We wonder if the waters of the everlasting ocean have not taught her a new theological lesson ? We know not. All we know is, that she gives no sign—she dies game.

She utters no cry to God ! Gives utterance to no penitential sentiment. She merely raises a sharp cry of anguish—holds a violent struggle with death ; looks her last upon the sky, with its summery fleecing clouds ; and the shore, with its beech, grove, bath-house, and arbor ; looks her last upon the waters of the cruel sea, which thus returns her worship ; thinks that had it not been for her own eccentricity, in placing her bath-house so far from the rest, she might now have received aid ; thinks once more upon all those who died beside the very sea in which now herself is perishing ; thinks of, God only knows what else beside.

Then the waters close, and she is lost to human sight forever. Her body was never recovered. The sea, in this case, claimed her as peculiarly its own. Her bones are, probably, lying in some ocean cavern, and strange monsters sport around them. They will never be raised, until the day of general, and awful resurrection !

And, at the moment, the very second of her final disappearance beneath the waves, a little incident takes place. The leaves of the infidel book, which the dying woman had just been reading, and which she had left upon the seat in the arbor, are agitated by a gentle breeze, and open on a page on which commences a chapter, headed : "Is there a God ?"

* * * * * * *

By Mrs. Kincarde's death, Julia Witherson's inheritance from George H. Shiner, was materially increased. Besides all fear of legal proceedings vanished with her only formidable opponent. Julia was now not only a large but an undisputed heiress.

CHAPTER II.

THE TWO SINNERS AND THE TEN COMMANDMENTS.

During this eventful summer Henry Hericot in turn encountered a peculiar adventure, which it is our intention, in the present chapter, particularly to describe.

Fanny Walters, though living in the same city with her betrayer, and anxious to meet him face to face, had never yet chanced upon him. Once she fell on his track, but yet he escaped her. Since that time, up till the middle of July, her search for her destroyer was unsuccessful. Though Hericot was a frequenter of houses such as those which formed her "home," yet he never happened to patronize the particular establishment in which she lived. Though he daily promenaded Broadway, and she likewise, yet, strange as it may sound, they never met.

But Fanny had many other matters to occupy her mind. She was not like many women, a monomaniac on the subject of her wrongs and her revenge; she dashed and coquetted, and was gay and reckless, dressed gorgeously and dined luxuriously. And occasionally, during the summer she visited her sister in the country, brought her presents, kissed her, gave her loving and most excellent advice, and then returned to her vice and extravagance. And so the month of June and the earlier half of July passed by, and were gathered, with all their records of good and evil, with the years before the flood.

One afternoon, the 15th July (which, by the by, was Fanny's twentieth birth-day), she, accompanied by a female of her own class, took a ride in the Park. There was music in "the Central" that afternoon, by a well-known band, and a great concourse were assembled. Hundreds, we may, per-

chance, say truthfully, thousands of men, women and children were gathered together, presenting a varied picture of great attraction.

Men with gray hair; young men with the faintest perceptible trace of a mustache; toddling children, with scarce a hair upon their heads; women, aged, wrinkled, bowed down, melancholy; brilliant women, in the prime of life, sweeping proudly by, drawn in their elegant equipages by yet more elegant spans of superb horses; young girls roaming about, laughing and chatting gaily; rich men in their carriages; "fast" young fellows in their stylish turnouts; mechanics and laborers with their families, seated in groups upon the grass, enjoying an economical pic-nic; the wearied man of business, the darkly-whiskered, evil-eyed gambler; the faithful nurse, with the merry little children; the escaped shop-girls; the young lady and her lover, sauntering slowly amidst the trees and the sunlight towards the more secluded portions of the Park; ever and anon some well-known man, some leading lawyer, editor, volunteer officer or politician, walking with his staff of satellites and toadies, an object of general attention; ugly men and handsome men; ugly women and handsome women; people in purple and people in rags; clergymen, thieves, venders of small wares, women of virtue and respectability; women of no respectability or virtue whatever; beggars and policemen; fat Germans, stout Englishmen, hard-featured Scotchmen, good-natured, though rather dirty and jolly Irishmen.

These and many more classes of humanity were presented, while the band, surrounded by a gaping crowd of idlers, their brass instruments glistening in the sunlight, discoursed most eloquent music, which, though it occasionally startled some high-spirited steed with its trumpet notes, sounded deliciously to the pleasure-voyagers upon the not distant and delightful lake, which was here and there visible through the openings in the groves; while the fresh, green, gorgeous grass, the sweet-scented, rarely-painted flowers, the clear

cloudless sky, the balmy air, combined with all the human panorama presented to the eye, formed a combination of attractions well worth study and admiration.

And amidst this gay and varied scene Fanny Walters and her companion passed and repassed in their elegant, though, of course, *hired* vehicle. Her companion was a woman, ugly and vulgar, who looked her real character, but Fanny herself was gorgeously beautiful; never in all her life had she looked more charming; and as she rode by, though the glances of the women expressed their contempt for her, yet the eyes of all men, young and old, rested upon her with admiration.

We may here, en passsant, ask the authorities of our cities, our civic magistrates, if it is not *too* much, this allowing notorious characters not only to fester our streets, but also to pollute with their presence our squares, parks, and public places by day? But to return to Fanny Walters.

Just as she was on the point of giving the driver orders to return to the city, thinking that she had heard enough of the music for one afternoon, she suddenly started, and her countenance assumed an expression utterly indescribable, because compounded of so many conflicting emotions. She saw a face in the crowd, a face which she had not seen for years, which she had sought after long and earnestly, a handsome but a bad face, that of Henry Hericot.

The memories of her wrongs rushed to her heart in a bitter tide of passion; she had sworn revenge upon him whenever and wherever she might meet him. Now, now is the time for vengeance! With her eyes flashing with the lightnings of hate, she was about to spring from the carriage, rush to Hericot, who, surrounded by several of his gay companions, was standing at some distance; and do she knew not what, but something terrible, when her companion, who had watched her with astonishment, seized her by the arm and prevented her design. The carriage with the two women passed on, and when it returned in its course to the spot where Fanny Walters had seen Hericot, he was gone.

This incident may seem unimportant; but it will cease to appear so when we record the following brief dialogue between Hericot and one of his companions, as they were leaving the Park that afternoon:

"Who was that girl in the carriage, whom we saw just now ttempting to spring out in a furious manner? I merely caught glimpse of her face, but in some strange way it appeared familiar."

These were the words of Hericot, and his companion replied:

"Oh, that was Fanny Walters, one of the gayest girls in town. She lives at Madame D——'s. She has lived there for years. You must have met her there."

"No," said Hericot, "I could not have met her at Madame D——'s, for the simple reason that I have never been inside of that establishment in my life."

"Never been to Madame D——'s? Why, you surely must be jesting."

"No. Somehow or other, it has always happened that whenever I have determined to visit that place, and have set out for that purpose, something or other has turned up to take me elsewhere. I seem fated in this respect."

"Pshaw! make one more trial, Hericot. Come with me there to-night, and see this Fanny Walters. She is the gayest girl in town."

"Agreed," cried Hericot, "I will make it a point to go with you to-night and see this woman, whom you call 'Fanny Walters.' Her face haunts me. I have known that woman before, I am certain; but *where?* I cannot place her."

"No matter," replied his friend, "you will find out all about t to-night."

"So be it," said Hericot.

So the result of this little incident in the Park this summer's afternoon proved to be that Henry Hericot, himself, is on the point of satisfying unconsciously Fanny Walters' dearest wish, and is about to gratify her longing for revenge. She has not

hitherto been able to meet him; he, therefore, goes to meet her.

Reader, there *is* such a thing as *fatality*.

* * * * * * *

Afternoon glides on toward evening; and, at last, night has come. Night, with its twinkling stars, brilliant lights, noisy pleasure, and noisome sin. And Henry Hericot and his companion wend their way to the establishment of Madame D——.

This is the same house alluded to in Book Second—the house to which Julia Witherson paid, years ago, a visit, in the vain hope to redeem one of its inmates, Fanny Walters, who has resided there ever since.

When we first saw this house, it was closed—at noon. It is now open—at night. It was then visited by women; it is now to be visited by men. The parlors were then dark; they are now illuminated. They were then tenantless; they are now occupied by a number of young women, painted and gaudily-dressed.

Hericot and his companion reach the door and pull the bell. A wicked-looking old negress peers through the grating, opens the door, and recognizing one of the two, admits them both. It is rather early in the evening, and no visitors have yet arrived save themselves. Consequently, on this occasion there is none of the usual mystery and caution, but the young men are shown at once into the parlor.

"But where is Fanny?" asks Hericot's companion.

"Oh, she will be down directly," answers one of the women.

"I wish to see her a moment." And so saying, the speaker, Hericot's companion, rushes from the room. Presently he makes his re-appearance, and whispers to Hericot:

"I have told Fanny of your being struck with her this afternoon at the Park, and she desires to see you. I will remain with these women till your return."

And Hericot, wondering somewhat at this departure from the usual etiquette of these places, wends his way to the apartment of Fanny Walters.

There Fanny is awaiting him in a strange commotion of feel-

ing. She knows not whether her new visitor will prove to be her betrayer, *the* man whom she saw this afternoon in the Park, or merely one of the many men who might have observed her on the same occasion. And it is this doubt that has led her to receive her visitor privately.

Hericot advances to the door of the apartment, and knocks. He hears a voice utter "Come in." He enters, and, for the first time for years, Henry Hericot and Fanny Walters are face to face.

She occupies now the same large, elegantly-furnished room as she did at the date of Julia Witherson's first visit to her; the walls are ornamented with the same highly-colored prints, and on the mantel-piece stands the same fanciful old clock.

But Fanny Walters is not now (as then) "clad in a hastily-donned morning-wrapper," but is attired in all the glory of full dress. She does look gloriously, even more superbly lovely than we beheld her this afternoon. Her fine form, her brilliantly dark complexion, her long, luxuriant, black hair, her perfectly-moulded, ring-sparkling hands, her handsome face, these challenge all admiration. But more than admiration is inspired by her appearance at the present moment; her countenance has a passionate expression of joy, hate, grief, upon it that words cannot adequately render; her small, exquisitely-shaped mouth is curved in a scornful triumph; and her deep black, restless, fiery eye "looks daggers" at the man who stands before her in astonishment. Astonishment at the expression of her countenance, astonishment at the likeness she bears to some one whom he has met and known before, though he cannot as yet recall whom.

"Do you know me? *Do you know me, Arthur Hamilton*, or whatever else your name may be? Do you know your victim?"

She asks this question with a menacing tone and a flashing eye.

The name "Arthur Hamilton," the name he had assumed when he betrayed the girl now known as "Fanny Walters," recalls scenes long forgotten. *He remembers her now.*

"Do you know me? *Answer*, I say!" and she dilates her form and stamps passionately with her little, exquisitely delicate foot upon the floor.

"Yes." Hericot at last finds words to utter, "You are"——

"*The woman you have murdered!*" interrupts the girl. "The woman who, ere she knew you, was as pure as the snow when it first falls from heaven. The woman who, ere you crossed her path, was the joy of her old father, and the pride of her true, young lover; who was once good and beloved, and therefore happy, oh, how happy! But *you* came; you, with your handsome face and your city graces, and your smooth lies, and your devilish heart. You came, and I, in a fatal hour, lost all! Home, my father, my lover, myself, my soul! Like a cursed coward, you used art, or force. And I have become—*what* have I become?" she almost shrieked; "what have I become, Arthur Hamilton?"

"Now do not vex yourself into all this passion, and listen to me a moment," said Hericot, who, having recovered from his first shock of surprise, understood "the position," as he thought, having passed through somewhat similar scenes before this. "Let me but have a chance to talk to her a while," he reasoned, "and I will soon change her rage into something much more agreeable." To tell the truth, he had much reason to think this, for, with the exception of Julia, he had never yet failed, by means of his wonderful power of tongue, to mollify and re-delude his female victims. But he mistook the nature of Fanny, who cried:

"No, I will *not* listen to you again. It is now my time to speak. What have I become? I will tell you. A lost one—an outcast—a Camille, as you men of fashion phrase it. I am considered more vile than the very dust and refuse of the streets. True, I wear fine dresses, and receive costly presents, and am flattered. But the dresses are dearly purchased, and the gifts and flatteries are from those who despise me. No true woman associates with me, no true man visits me. 'Home,' 'wife,'

'mother,' 'husband,' 'children,' these are unknown words in the vocabulary of my horrible life. I am cursed of earth and of heaven. My father has cursed me, and the great God *will*. I am ruined here, I shall be damned hereafter." She spoke these awful words with a terrible emphasis. "I know all this, and I know, too, that you have been the cause of all. Were it not for you, I should have been, at this moment, a happy mother and an honored wife. May the curse of the Everlasting rest upon you."

She drew herself up, as she spoke, to her utmost height, and her flashing eyes seemed to dart forth fire upon the amazed and really somewhat alarmed Hericot.

Almost any other man would have been conscience-stricken, but he was *not*, for the simple reason that he had no conscience whatever. He was merely somewhat in doubt whether she might not in her present state of excitement inflict some bodily injury upon him. He was a physical coward, and he dreaded an encounter with an enraged woman.

In truth, Fanny Walters seemed as though she were on the point of rushing at him like an angry tigress. "I *hate* you, Arthur Hamilton!" she cries. "I have vowed revenge upon you. Why should I not have it now? You are in my power. I could *kill* you. Why should I not do so, Arthur Hamilton?"

The demon of vengeance seemed now to have possession of her soul. She glared round the room wildly, as though in search of some instrument of death; then she looked at her destroyer, fixedly, as though calculating his power of resistance did she attempt a personal rencontre. Hericot now, thoroughly frightened, endeavored to escape. But she, watching his every movement with a lynx-like eye, threw herself suddenly against the door, and thus barred his passage. And then she gazed at him a moment fixedly.

He was white with fear, but as handsome as ever—villain and poltroon, as he was, his personal beauty was preëminent. He was elegantly dressed, too—attired with his usual artistic taste. And something in his attitude now, at this moment, reminded

the woman who stood there gazing at him of "old times," of days long past, happy days, though brief and fatal, when his attitude was as graceful as the one he now assumed, though from very different causes.

Would you believe it, reader, a sudden, strange, inexplicable, but palpable revulsion of feeling took place in the breast of Fanny Walters, caused by nothing else saving this chance coincidence of attitude?

Of such wonderful elements are we made. Such is the power of association of ideas. An emotion of almost tenderness stole, spite of her resistance, into her heart toward the man before her. She had loved him once. His lips had been pressed tenderly to hers. Once she would have died for him. The rage in her eye diminished; the scorn on her face lessened; she gazed at him regretfully, almost tenderly.

Ah! woman is a remarkable creature! And the female heart is a most mysterious volume!!

Hericot watched the change in his companion's demeanor, and interpreted it correctly. His fear departed, and he smiled. He could soothe and conquer her yet. He assumed a tender look, and endeavored to take her hand. But she shuddered at his touch, and her face grew dark again. Still the crisis of violence in her mood was past, and Hericot used all his arts to pacify and please her. But a gloomy sadness seemed now, for a while, to take the place of her former rage, and his efforts to overcome it were vain.

He glanced around the room. He saw a little book lying upon a table. His *rôle* was now to change the current of her thoughts. So, asking, in a light, gay tone, "What have we here?—some spicy French work for summer reading?" he opened the volume. It was a copy of the Holy Bible. Utterly surprised at seeing such a book in such a place, he turned to the fly-leaf, and—could he believe his eyes?—there was Julia Witherson's name inscribed upon it, and in her own handwriting—he knew it well.

It seemed unaccountable. A book of Julia's in a place

like this! Could his companion have stolen it? Not thinking of the abruptness of the question, he turned to Fanny, and asked:

"How came this book here?"

"It was given me by a kind friend," was the reply,—"the only *friend* I have met for years. Why do you ask?" she said, sharply.

"Did the person whose name is written here give it to you?" inquired Hericot, more intent upon discovering the history of this Bible than aught else at this moment.

"Yes; it was given me by the kind lady herself, in this room, with her own hands."

"Are you certain it was the owner herself?"

"Yes—perfectly certain. But what is this to you? *You* cannot know this good lady. She does not mingle with such as you. You could not try your cunning arts on *her*."

Alas! alas! Fanny Walters! In your gratitude to and admiration for the woman who once endeavored, though in vain, to save you, you have made a sad mistake.!

And a devilish smile flits over the handsome lips of Henry Hericot as he thinks how *malapropos* his companion's words are on this subject. But his smile is succeeded by a look of perplexity, as he endeavors to account for Julia's acquaintanceship with and visit to such a woman as Fanny and in such a place as this. "I will find out all about it presently," he thinks; "it may be of use to me hereafter. A most astonishing girl that Julia!"

"A rather strange book to come across in one's rambles," was the remark of Hericot, as he replaced the Bible, which had hitherto been held in his hand, upon the table.

These words seemed also *malapropos;* for, as soon as they were uttered, Fanny Walters, looking full in his face, said:

"You are right, Arthur Hamilton," (she *would* persist to-night in calling him by the assumed name under which he had known her and destroyed her)—"you are right. It *is* a strange book to be in the hands of such a man as you. It is a strange book

to be found in the room of such a creature as myself. Would to God it were *not* so strange. You smile one of your abominable smiles. But I tell you, Arthur Hamilton, that though you may laugh at, yet *I* believe in that book. Yes; I—wretch that I am, wretch as I ever *must* and *will* be—do believe that that book is a true and good book. I used to read it often before I knew you—I read it even now, sometimes. It tells me what I *might have been*, but what I can never, never, never be."

She spoke these words so sadly, yet so passionately:

"It *is* a good book. And if I had but followed its precepts I would never have been here, and with you. And whose fault is it that I *am* here, in spite of the words of that Holy Book? Whose fault but yours? 'Thou art the man!' I read those words sometimes in that Bible. And again I say,—'Thou art the man!'"

And she pointed her finger towards her companion, and her eye seemed to pierce the very secrets of his wicked soul; while he, overawed by her earnestness, felt for a moment as David must have felt in the presence of the angry prophet, Nathan.

But he recovered himself, and said, lightly:

"Pshaw! let us drop the Bible, as you call it. I have much to say to you, Mary."

He called her for the first time by her old and real name—the name by which she was known in her pure childhood. He called her by her old name tenderly, thinking it would recall to her the days of their mutual love. And so it did. But, alas! she remembered that these were also the days of mutual *guilt*—that her lover was also her betrayer. The latter horrible memories overpowered the former delicious ones. And she cried:

"Call me not, Mary; call me not again by the sweet name of my girlhood, unless you wish me to strangle you. And I will *not* 'drop the Bible,'" she continued. "Listen to me. There *is* a God, and you know it and feel it; and He will call you to judgment some day. Aye, to *judgment!* And He will judge you by this very Bible. He will say to you, Arthur Hamilton, or whatever else you may be called, you once knew

a young, and happy, and virtuous woman. What did you with her? And then you will be forced to answer, like a trembling coward, 'I lied to her, pretended love to her, and destroyed her forever.' And then He will destroy you, Arthur Hamilton."

As she spoke, her proud, magnificent form seemed almost to expand beyond its natural limits; her eye flashed forth its most vivid lightnings; her long, rich, black hair escaped from its confinement, and was flung over and down her shoulders; her dark face glowed; her exquisite mouth seemed endowed with the very grace of scorn; and her rounded arm seemed to be hurling the thunders of condemnation.

And Hericot gazed on this strange creature with wonder, mingled with fear. But he disguised the latter as well as he might, and said, in that light, careless tone, which he could adopt at pleasure, "Let us proclaim a truce to this war of tongues; let us end our melodrama, and be good friends, as we used to be. One would think, to hear you now, that you were a priest about to deliver a lecture upon the Ten Commandments."

"The Ten Commandments! I did not suppose that you knew there were that many, *or any*," said Fanny, bitterly. Then she continued. "They tell us that one day *He* shall come with awful majesty to judge all men and all women; and He will judge us by this little book," taking in her hand the Bible (which, as our readers have ere this remembered, Julia gave to Fanny at the termination of their first interview, and which Fanny had ever since cherished as a keepsake; aye, and even read occasionally).

"Fancy that the time has come," she continues; "fancy that the heavens and earth have passed away; that all the dead have become alive; that the ground and the sea have yielded up their multitudes; and that He is seated on His awful throne, with His eye of lightning, and His voice of thunder; that far beneath Him hell is yawning with its yells and agon-

ies, and eternal fires ; and that *you* and *I* are standing before Him."

As she drew this dread picture she seemed like one inspired ; and in his own despite, Hericot the infidel became, for the moment, Hericot "the devil, who believed and trembled."

"Fancy all this," she continued, "and then fancy that He opens this dread book, this Bible, and He turns to me and asks me, pointing to a certain chapter, 'Here are the commandments I have given you to live by. Have you lived by them ?' And I will have to answer, 'No, oh, God !' And then He will ask, 'And wherefore not ?' And then I shall turn to you and say to the Judge, 'This man prevented me, oh, God !' And then, with an awful frown, He will look at you with an eye that will make you call upon the hills to cover you and hide you from its glance ; and He will say, 'Man, worm, sinner, I have told you to have no other God but me, and, lo, you have made gods of your lies and your lusts.' And then He will open the Bible as I do now, at this very place where I now open it, at the twentieth chapter of a book called Exodus, and He, the great God, and the just Judge, will continue thus :

"'Man, sinner, I have told thee, Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain, and thou hast thyself daily profaned it, and hast made this woman beside thee to lead such a life that she must needs blaspheme it also. Man, sinner, I have told thee, Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy, but thou hast thyself polluted this day, and hast driven this woman to a career in which my Sabbath is not known. Man, sinner, I have told thee, Honor thy father and thy mother, but thou hast brought upon this woman her father's curse. I have told thee, Thou shalt not kill, yet thou hast slain her honor and her soul. Thou shalt not commit adultery, yet thou hast been all thy life an adulterer. Thou shalt not steal, yet thou hast stolen from thy companion her peace of soul, and hast forced her to become the companion of outcasts and of thieves.

" ' Man-sinner, what hast thou to reply to all these charges ?'

" ' Nothing !'

" ' Then, leave my presence for eternal torture. The woman is condemned, but thou shalt be punished with a ten-fold punishment. Thou hast a double curse to bear, and bear forever. Hers and thine own.' "

Think for a moment, reader, of the associations of this scene. There, in an evil house, surrounded by luxury and splendor, stands one of its handsome Evils, engaged in applying the words of Scripture to one of her visitors ! She stands erect, with the Bible in her beautiful jeweled hand, her chest heaving, the expression of her face indescribably grand, as though she, indeed, fancied herself the Judge, of whom she spoke.

She stands by the gas-light, revealed in all her costly attire and gorgeous beauty, passionate, yet awful in her loveliness, with her long hair floating down her shoulders, her flashing eye fixed upon her companion, and her arm, rounded and magnificent, pointing solemnly *downward*, as though to the land of torment, to which she has just devoted her betrayer.

While her handsome, elegantly-dressed, gentlemanly-looking visitor almost crouches before her ; with the echo of her fearfully solemn, because fearfully-true words still in his ears ; his soul, if soul he has, more affected, more reached, if we may be allowed the expression, than it has ever been before ; his mind filled with fantastic terrors.

While in the room directly underneath the champagne corks whizz merrily, and young men and maidens are gay and guilty. And far above them the bright stars in the still blue sky are shining purely. And above the stars shines *God !*

It is a strange scene—strange to us, who merely record it ! How much more astonishing must it have appeared to Henry Hericot himself, an actor in it !

But he soon recovered himself, partially, at least, and assuming as friendly and gay a tone as possible, said :

" Come, Fanny, or Mary, or whatever name you will, have we not had enough of this ? Curses can do no good. Be civil and agreeable as you are beautiful. Come, do. I am very glad

I have met you at last. I have often thought about you" (a lie, by-the-by). "The past is past, and cannot be altered; but the present and future can be as charming as you choose. I forgive you your rather harsh welcome of me. Come, let us be friends once more—shall we not?"

Hericot, though cowardly, must have been very impudent, indeed, to make advances such as these in the face of all that has just occurred. But it often happens that the utmost impudence is combined with the utmost cowardice. And it was thus in the present instance. But he calculated "without his host." Fanny Walters indignantly rejected his overtures.

"Touch me not," she cried, as he endeavored to take her hand. "Touch me not, or by the God above us, I will kill you." She said the words, aye, and she *meant* them, too. Hericot, with all his impudence, would no more have dared to have touched her *now* than he would have ventured into the den of a lioness.

"Listen," she said. "Listen to me. I hate you—I have told you so once—I repeat it—I hate you, I loathe you! A moment of woman's weakness *did* come to me, I confess. But it is gone, and will not return. I have vowed to be revenged upon you. I have sworn to kill your body, as you have slain my soul. And yet you dare to talk of our being "friends" again. Man, I tell you we never *were* friends. You never have loved any one. You never can. You have no heart. You are *a thing! But I will not kill you.* No, thanks to this little Book" (pointing to Julia's Bible). "I will spare you. I will leave you to the vengeance that will sooner or later overtake you, that *must* overtake all such men."

Here she pauses a moment; then resumes with the most marked emphasis: "But, mark my words. As surely as you will one day reach a hell, so surely will this hand of mine send you there before your time, *if you live as you have lived.* If you do unto other women hereafter, as in the past you have done unto me, and it comes to my knowledge, woe upon you. For I here swear," and she fell on her knees, perhaps for the

first and last time for years, and raised her fine eyes and her fine bared arms upwards, "by the God *there*, that I will then avenge my own wrongs, and those of my sex, upon you, by my own hand. I have sworn my oath," she said, rising. So, if you value your life, take heed to your morals.

"And now go—depart," she cried, waving her hand imperiously. "I will watch you, but never see me more. Never visit this house again. Go, you once deserted me; I now order you to quit my presence. Be wise, and beware! Depart—farewell—and see that it be forever!"

She opened the door, and fairly pushed the amazed Hericot out of the apartment. The door was bolted behind him. And the strange interview was over.

CHAPTER III.

THE SKY BECOMES CLOUDY.

Let us now return to our heroine, Julia Witherson, whom we left perfectly happy. She was re-united to the man she loved. His mother, so long and so bitterly opposed to her, now received her alliance on the most honorable terms. What more had she to wish for?

Charles recovered his health rapidly. Ah! there is no physician like a happy heart! We may prate as we please of homeopathy, and allopathy, and hydropathy; but the best system of all for cures is *joy*-pathy! And midst the benign influence of Julia's smiles our wounded soldier-lover soon waxed strong. He returned to New York, resigned his commission, and devoted himself solely to his mistress, his mother, his love, and his bliss. As Julia was wealthy, and as she insisted that all that was hers was her lover's, our hero no longer had the fear of poverty before his eyes. So that the sky of our fortunate pair seemed cloudless.

One day, particularly, Julia was, indeed, most happy. She had passed the morning with Charles' mother—the ladies being engaged in that delicious, but costly feminine amusement, "shopping." An amusement, by-the-by, the love of which, like the love of dress, seems implanted by nature in the bosom of every female that is born into this world. During their purchases, Charles had joined them, and the trio were as merry as three grown-up people could well be without attracting the particular attention of the public or the police.

Having completed their purchases, they wended their way homeward. But Julia, having some little "private business" to transact, immediately afterwards started out alone to visit some

of her poor *protégés*. This *charity* was the private business to which she alluded; for Julia was not one who, when happy herself, forgot those in affliction.

And as she walked on her errands of benevolence her whole soul poured itself secretly in praise to Him, the Author of all good—the sender of her present perfect bliss. She wondered if any woman who had ever lived had been as blest as she felt now; she wondered if ever woman had loved and been loved like her; she felt that all the sorrows, shames, and struggles of the past were naught when compared with the joy of the present, and the anticipations of the future. She acknowledged to herself that she was utterly unworthy of the good fortune she was now receiving; but she vowed silently, but solemnly, to strive to render herself worthy of it hereafter. And her heart fairly bounded with gratitude and love to Charles, to Charles' mother, and to heaven.

But as the very darkest hour is often just before dawn, so it sometimes happens that the brightest heart-day suddenly changes into a dreary midnight of the soul. At once, in a moment, we are hurled from pleasure into torture, from hope into despair. And thus with Julia. Her agonies were not yet over. More suffering was needed to develope the noble qualities, if not of herself, of her lover. Every step which Julia was now taking along the cheerful-looking streets was carrying her on toward a sad, startling discovery.

But, to explain, we must take a glance backwards for a moment.

Some months ago, Julia, while making some purchases in a store—which she patronized liberally because she liked the proprietress personally,—noticed some very fine specimens of fancy needle-work exhibited in the window. On instituting some inquiries in regard to them, the shopkeeper informed our heroine that they were the work of a young girl whose acquaintance she had recently made, and whose principal characteristic was *sorrow*. That is, she seemed more remarkable for real or affected grief and melancholy, than for aught else. Her sadness seemed

to be independent of pecuniary or physical causes ; to be, in short, a sorrow of the mind. The only thing she cared for, in the way of an amusement, was embroidery and fancy needle-work generally. She possessed great aptitude for these pursuits, as was evident from the samples in the window, and was a neat, quiet, and quite pretty young woman.

This description interested our heroine, and procuring the name and residence of this person from the shopkeeper, she paid her a visit, giving, as a pretext, her desire to obtain some specimens of needle-work.

Julia found the statements of the shopkeeper to be correct The girl was decidedly pretty, of the mild and meek order of beauty, and, though in very humble circumstances and in failing health, seemed to be contented with the one, and resigned to the other. But, still beyond all this, there seemed to be a deep sadness, which darkened her countenance and possessed her soul ; a sadness which Julia found, in the course of several visits which she paid, to be beyond her cure—a sadness of the soul, arising from some mysterious cause.

The girl, whose name was Hetty Thorpe, interested our heroine more and more, and, as the two became intimate, Julia endeavored cunningly, though, of course, delicately, to fathom the depths of her new *protégé's* secret. But to no purpose. Though communicative enough on most subjects, though unreserved in her expressions on all other points, Hetty, whenever her own sorrows were the theme, was as silent as the grave. As a necessary consequence, our heroine became still more interested in Hetty Thorpe, and still more determined to penetrate her secret, so that she might relieve it.

Passing in Hetty's neighborhood to-day, Julia determined to call upon her. The girl resided in C—— Court, a quiet, retired, and rather respectable little street, inhabited mostly by poor, but decent people. On reaching the house in which she resided, our heroine found her humble friend in tears—weeping bitterly. The strange interest which Julia felt in this sad creature, now deepened at this unusual display of suffering, and she endeavored,

by all the means in her power, to soothe the mysteriously-weeping Hetty. But in vain.

"I shall never be happy on this earth any more," said the girl,—"never, never, never."

"And wherefore not?" asked Julia. "What have you to render you so wretched? Is your health worse than usual?

"Oh, no, I shall live out my time, I suppose, and I do not suffer much."

"Are you in want of any assistance?" inquired her visitor.

"Oh, no, I can earn by my needle all that I need," was the reply.

"Tell me, then, Hetty, *do* tell me what ails you," said Julia earnestly. "I have cherished a warm regard for you, you know I have."

"Yes, Madam, you have been a kind patron to me," interrupted the girl.

"Nay, do not call me 'Madam,'" cried our generous *un*aristocratic heroine. "Call me Julia, just as I call you Hetty, and do not consider me as a patron, but as a *friend*, as a sister."

"*Sister*," reiterated Hetty. "Sister. Oh! if I had only had a sister or a brother, I would not be what I now am."

Here was a discovery, at least more than Julia had been able to discover before. Hetty Thorpe was sisterless and brotherless. Julia's heart warmed yet more towards the lonely girl.

"Oh, be frank," she cried, "be frank with me, and tell me what your secret is; your secret that makes you so unhappy Believe me, I can aid you. Even if I *cannot*, your very confession to me, and my friendly sympathy, will make you less sorrowful."

"My confession! Who told you that I have anything to confess?" asked the girl rather sharply.

"I know that you have some *secret* grief; the cause of which I fain would know. I feel an extraordinary, an unac

countable interest in you, Hetty. Again I say that I may be able to relieve you. Again I tell you that I would be your friend, your sister. Will you not confide in me?"

Julia plead as earnestly as though she were entreating some great personal boon of her companion. Ah! how foolish we mortals are. Had Julia been wise she would never have sought to penetrate into Hetty's secret. She would have avoided Hetty as a pestilence; she would have desired to remain in perpetual and total ignorance of her existence.

"Where ignorance is bliss," etc. But, alas! Julia Witherson was not wise.

A new idea, to-day, took possession of Hetty Thorpe.

Though she had determined never to confess her secret to any one; though she had determined to bear it in her own bosom unrevealed till the day of judgment; yet there are certain moments in which we suddenly, on some strange impulse, break the carefully reasoned resolve of years. There are persons, moved towards whom, in some inexplicable manner, in whose favor we violate all our strongest resolutions.

The present to Hetty was one of those moments; Julia was one of those persons. The girl knew that her confession must be a painful one of shame; that her visitor could do nothing for her; yet she had taken so strange a fancy to Julia; Julia entreated so earnestly for her confidence; poor Hetty so longed to communicate her sorrows to at least *one* human heart (even though in communicating her sorrows she also revealed her shame); above all, the strange, wild influence of the moment was so strong upon her, that, spite of reason and determination, she confessed all.

And what a confession it was! The hearing of it formed one of the crises in the life of Julia Witherson. It was an epoch in her existence. She had entered the room occupied by Hetty Thorpe, radiant with happiness; her eyes sparkling with the light of a happy soul. She now stood in that room (that little, humble, though neat apartment, whose only adornments were specimens of needle work) with her eye-light

darkened and the joy of her soul departed. The confession of Hetty Thorpe had wrought this dire change in a few minutes. Julia's desire was gratified; her curiosity was satisfied; she knew Hetty's secret, and much good did the knowledge do her. *So* much good that her heart almost ceased to beat, not with ecstacy but torture; so much good that she offered up to heaven a prayer for mercy and for death.

And yet the confession of Hetty Thorpe was not a remarkable one. It was, on the contrary, such a story as many a woman had narrated before her time, and will narrate, alas! until the end of time—a sad, shameful, but old and trite story of foolish love, guilty love, desertion, and unavailing regret.

She had lived in her early youth near —— College, where a handsome student and his equally handsome, though corrupt friend, made her acquaintance in a rather romantic manner. She liked the former, though she disliked the latter. The student became intimate with her. She *loved* the student. He took advantage of her love, and, under the promise of marriage, seduced her. He then would, out of honor, have fulfilled his pledge, but she overheard his friend dissuading him from so doing, and laughing at him. She also overheard the student himself confess that it would injure his prospects greatly if he should marry her; and then she waited to hear no more.

In a tumult of feeling, not knowing what she did, anxious only to hide her sorrow and her shame from those who had loved her in her pure childhood, believing that her case was hopeless, she had left her home, had lived in New York, supporting herself by her skill in the needle; and she had never seen her betrayer since; but she knew his real name. It was *Charles Singerly!*

Hetty Thorpe concluded her story with these words: "And oh! Miss Witherson, or rather 'friend,' 'sister,' if you will allow such a wretch as I have now shown myself to claim your

promise," (a silent pressure of the hand was Julia's only answer) "it is the memory of my shame which makes and keeps me sad. What is sickness or poverty compared to the everlasting recollection of my disgrace? Nothing but death can free me from my sorrow. Only one thing else—*my marriage to Charles.* My marriage to the man who promised to marry me, and who would have kept his promise had not his wicked friend, whom he called by the name of Henry, prevented him. I love Charles yet, and I have sometimes thought that even now, though years have passed, were he alive and unmarried, and did he know how I, his early but willing victim, still loved him, and how, above all things I longed to redeem my honor by a marriage with him, he would still fulfil his promise."

Reader, is it possible for any pen to do full justice to the emotions of Julia, as there, in that little room, looking out into the humble street, on that bright, beautiful day, she stood, listening to the confession of Hetty Thorpe? We think not. At least we can but briefly and imperfectly sketch the mental tumult in our poor heroine's soul.

At first she was inclined to doubt the story she had just heard, or, rather, Charles' connection with it. But in vain she strove to doubt. Conviction was borne with irresistible weight upon her mind. Hetty's description of the personal appearance both of the "student" and his "friend," tallied exactly with Charles Singerly and Henry Hericot; the college, the date, the particulars of the story, were all too accurate. Julia now remembered that her betrothed lover once had the reputation of being very "fast;" she also remembered various allusions which Charles had made in his interviews with her to his having erred himself in youth with women, and she understood these allusions now.

Yes, it was all too true. Charles himself, the noble, poet, Charles, her lover, her betrothed, the man she worshiped, was, after all, but a seducer. Seized with a sudden impulse, Julia took from its hiding-place, near her heart, a medallion likeness of her lover and held it to the gaze of her companion. Ah!

there was no mistaking that look of recognition, tenderness, and astonishment; that look which overspread at once the face of Hetty, the moment her eyes fell upon the miniature of Charles Singerly. Yes, Julia felt that it was all too true, indeed! Hetty Thorpe was one of her lover's victims!

"Ah, that is he!" cried Hetty, as she beheld the medallion. "You know him, then—is he alive?"

"Yes," forced itself from the lips of Julia.

"And is—is he—is he *married?*"

"No." For the life of her Julia could not then have said another word.

"Thank God!" cried her companion. "And then," she continued, addressing Julia with an earnestness totally at variance with her wonted, dispirited manner, "you will see him, will you not? You will tell him that I love him still; you will remind him that I have a claim upon his honor. You will tell him that I will die with shame and grief unless he fulfils his pledge. That I never have doubted his truth, but knew that he would have done me right had it not been for his wicked friend. And that I will make him a good wife, and will never disgrace him. You will tell him all this, will you not? or will you bring me to him?"

Realize, reader, our heroine's position. Asked to beg her own betrothed lover to marry another; and asked, too, by one, alas! who had a *right*. Imagine, then, oh reader, if you can, our heroine's feelings! She replied to her companion's entreaties coldly, hiding fire by ice: "You ask me to say strange things; things very strange to be said by a woman to a man."

But a new idea occurred to Hetty. A light broke in upon her. She turned to her visitor and said, "But perhaps you will not do this. You will not tell him what I wish. Perhaps you *love him yourself?*"

Twenty-four hours ago, nay, two hours ago, Julia Witherson would have acknowledged her love for Charles Singerly in the face of heaven and earth, acknowledged it proudly, gladly asserted her claim to his heart, in the hearing of assembled

thousands! But now—she might still love him—she could hardly tell *how* she felt towards him, but, at any rate, she could no longer assert confidently her affection. Another had now a right to challenge it; and so she replied, evasively: "I am but a friend of Mr. Singerly's."

"Will you tell him of me—will you bring him to me?" asked Hetty, earnestly.

Poor Julia! Whatever else might or might not happen, she felt convinced that, at least, Charles must be informed of to-day's discovery, he must know of Hetty Thorpe's existence, he must see her. And so she promised to comply with her companion's request.

And shortly afterwards our heroine departed from the house in which she had learned so fatal a secret.

Had a man stood at this time near C—— court, he would have seen a tall, stately young lady issue forth from one of the houses, traverse the court, lower her veil, and bend her rapid steps towards the more crowded streets, and, mingling with the throng, pursue her way—while the sun shone brightly, and the streets were full of bustle. All this would be an every day affair.

But if this man were to be told that this lady was suffering in her heart the tortures of love, despair, and various other contending emotions; if he were to be told that this ladylike, rapidly-moving, well-dressed female figure, who attracted no particular attention, was as wretched a being as walked the earth; that in her breast a tragedy was being performed that far surpassed in thrilling sorrow the most sensational French melodrama; had he been told all this, the man would have wondered greatly. And yet he would have been told but the simple truth; for the female figure was Julia Witherson.

Ah! reader, our greatest tragedies are not always presented in the dramatic form; or, at least, the stage is not the only place where dramas are enacted. Horrible melodramas often take place unnoticed in the street; and ofttimes their theatre is the human heart

Julia's soul was in a whirl. At one moment she sharply condemned her lover, and the image of Charles Singerly as a betrayer and a liar rose up terribly before her. He was unworthy her love; wherein did he differ from Henry Hericot after all? But at another moment, her loving heart found many an excuse—or, at least, palliative—for Charles' conduct.

He had erred when he was very young—a mere boy. Doubtless, his "friend,"—*his* evil angel as well as *her own*—Hericot, had led him on. Doubtless, Charles would have fulfilled his pledge to his victim had not Hericot dissuaded him. Perhaps, spite of all, Charles would have done so if Hetty had not fled beyond his reach—who knows? At any rate, Julia doubted not that her lover had long ago sincerely repented of his early sin; and what was *she*, herself, that she should blame him? No; she forgave him. Aye, and she loved him still—loved him as dearly as ever. She knew this by the pang that thrilled her being, penetrated her every part, at the bare thought of renouncing him, of yielding him to another.

"But *why* should I give him up?" she mentally cried,—"why should I surrender my claim to him? Why tell him of the existence of Hetty Thorpe? Why inform him that his victim lives; and not only lives, but loves him still—and desires to become his wife? Why, truly? His wife! that should be *my* title; my claim to that is paramount. I have worked for it; prayed for it; confessed for it; endured shame and sorrow for it—my right to it is supreme. Why need *he* know of *her* existence? I am not forced to tell. Other men have committed 'early indiscretions' and *not* had their whole lives blasted by it! Why should he and I be more ill-fated in this respect than others? Perhaps, after all, she is but an impostor—or more to be blamed than pitied. Or, at best, she, and he, and I have all three sinned. Now, as there must be some suffering, why not *one* suffer rather than *two*? Why not she alone rather than Charles and I? Why shall not we marry and be happy? Oh! I cannot yield him up. I cannot see him taken from me for ever; just at the moment, too, when we are to be supremely blest! I cannot, by

my own act and tongue, destroy my own life-happiness. I cannot do this. Oh, God! it is too much, too much. I have already done all that woman can do, borne all that woman can bear; but *this* is too much for humanity."

So it is, dear Julia! But there is such a thing as nobility of soul; such a thing as the Grace of God, and nothing is "too much" for that. And this Grace changed the current of Julia's thoughts.

"Heaven forgive me," she cries, in the depths of her soul,—"what am I about to do? To dishonor my promise? To violate my word? To deprive a poor injured woman of her chiefest wish, of her dearest right? To undertake a dishonest concealment? And all for what? For my own selfish gratification! No; I have not the best right to be called his 'wife.' *She* has the stronger and the prior claim. What other men have or have not done, what other women in my place would or would not do, is no rule for me. I must walk in the path of honor and of conscience; and this path leads me to—to the informing him of all—all that I have this day learned, and promised to reveal. She is no impostor. I cannot cheat myself with such pretence. She is the woman who, at all hazards of suffering to himself or myself, has the sole right to be his wife. I *must* tell him of Hetty Thorpe. And what I must do, I *can* do. I must do my duty if I break my heart. Yes; I will tell him to-night all."

By this time she had reached the door of her uncle's residence—her home. She entered and proceeded quietly to her own room. She reached the apartment, locked the door—and was alone with her thoughts.

She had just formed a determination, on motives of principle, which, by her own act, would probably wreck her own earthly happiness. She had just determined to plead the cause of a rival with the man she loved. How Charles himself would look upon the matter, how he would act when he heard of her discovery, she knew not, she could only surmise. How he *ought* to act she knew; and this line of duty severed him from herself for ever.

She was alone; the unnatural calm of her manner departed; she threw herself in utter abandonment of spirit upon the bed. It was a lovely day; she cared not for it. Her bird, in its gilded cage by the window, sang, oh, how deliciously! But she heard it not. There she lay upon her sumptuous couch, in her gorgeous room, utterly wretched.

"Oh, my God!" she cried, starting up wildly, "my grief is greater than I can bear." But at this moment her distracted glance fell upon a fine painting of "Christ in the Garden."

A look upon the Divine patience of the face, a sight of the meekness in those Godlike eyes, and the wild fury of her sorrow departed. She murmured, "not my will but thine be done." And her soul was strengthened. She felt that it was best that she should tell Charles all; for otherwise she would herself never be happy in mind, but would always be haunted by the recollection of Hetty Thorpe; besides Hetty might, probably now *would*, discover Charles for herself; and if he did not hear the story from one he would hear it from the other.

It was hard, oh, so hard! But she repined not. She waited for evening to bring him to her, and the she would tell him all.

It was the noblest time of Julia's noble life.

She had, indeed, been made "perfect through suffering."

And there she remained. She thought but of three things: her duty, her once lover, and the fast-approaching evening.

CHAPTER IV.

EARLY SIN BRINGS A LATE REPENTANCE.

But fate has its own peculiar way of doing things; and in this case fate so managed it that on the very afternoon during which Julia sat in her room, awaiting the approach of dreaded evening, she received a hurried note from her lover, stating that he was obliged to go out of town at once on a pressing affair of business, and would not return till the next day; but that on to-morrow evening he would call upon her as usual. The note concluded with a line or two of love's extravagance and tender endearment.

On the receipt of this note our heroine scarcely knew whether to be pleased or vexed with the delay. One thing, however, she *did* do; she kissed the note many, many times, especially the concluding words,

Yours for ever, Charles.

She looked upon the letter fondly, as one would gaze upon a relic, for it might be the last letter she would ever receive from Charles Singerly. He calls himself "mine for ever." She murmured, "alas! for ever may mean scarce twenty-four hours more." And she hid the letter in her bosom.

The next day was a rainy and a very disagreeable one, and Charles returned to town about twelve in the morning; and having some further business to transact in the city, he traversed the streets on foot, to and fro, attended only by that constant companion of civilization in a rain—an umbrella.

A city during a storm, or rather during a "drizzle," is one of the most disagreeable, unpicturesque and undramatic objects in creation. The streets are mud and slush, mingled

with stones; the sidewalks are as damp as graveyards; the closed windows of the houses give an air of additional gloom to the surroundings; the deserted shops seem mourning over their departed customers; and the few people one meets seem as mournful as ghosts at a funeral.

Occasionally an omnibus rushes past, the poor driver dripping with rain, a human Niagara, and the poor horses, more than satisfied, apparently, with their involuntary shower-bath. But even this omnibus does not give you a pleasant idea, it merely serves to add a harsh noise to a cheerless scene, nothing more. All the men you encounter seem cross, in fact *are* cross; and all the women look ugly.

Occasionally at the corner of a street a group are gathered under shelter of some friendly awning, and a laugh may be heard; but it does not sound hearty or genuine, this laugh; it sounds rather as though its perpetrator were endeavoring to proceed on the Mark Tapley principle, and was determined to be "jolly," not because he really felt so, but because he conceived it to be his duty under the circumstances.

And then it is decidedly uncomfortable to be carrying around with you constantly, holding it carefully over your person, at the cost of a tired arm, a huge umbrella, such as it was Charles Singerly's lot to carry this morning. Finding it raining on his return to town, and being unprovided with an umbrella (having left his fine silk one at home), he had borrowed a large cotton affair from one of his business friends, and was now proceeding on his various errands, holding over himself a tremendous, ungainly, and very heavy circular awning, which would have delighted the eyes of a whole family during the deluge.

Now, dear reader, we ask you candidly, what can be more *un*romantic and *un*dramatic than a man, going from office to office, on matters of money and business, on a rainy, disagreeable, "dirty" day, carrying over him a common ugly, huge, cotton umbrella? We ask you what *can* there be startling or dramatic in the meeting between a man and a

woman on a rainy day, in the street, both of them carrying umbrellas?

And yet, dear reader, tragedies, or rather romantic and startling dramas, occasionally, *will* take place under just such unpoetical and unromantic circumstances as these.

Thus, upon this very day of which we write, Mr. Charles Singerly, being on his way to fulfil his last business errand, and walking rapidly to fulfil it, and then go home, suddenly finds his umbrella in collision with that of another pedestrian, a young woman. He apologizes for "his carelessness," and is about to pass on when he is startled by a slight scream, proceeding evidently from the aforesaid young female.

He casts a hasty, curious look upon her. She has recognized him! She calls him by his name of "Charles!"

He feels that he has heard that voice before, not of late years, but long ago certainly. And that face, too. It is somewhat altered, yet very familiar! Where can he have seen that face?

Ah, he remembers all now. Like a flash from the skies the memory darts through him. He recollects now but too well whose voice, whose face it is; he knows now where he last heard the one, and where he last saw the other. The face and the voice belong to a woman to whom he once paid court, whose love he won and abused; a woman of whom he has thought for years, remorsefully and regretfully; whom, however, he has recently forgotten in the glory of another and a mightier love; a woman whom he has thought was dead, but who now stands there on the sidewalk alive beside him.

And thus, and there, and then carrying umbrellas and bundles in the damp, dreary, public street, on that rainy day, for the first time for years, Charles Singerly and Hetty Thorpe meet!

Two or three persons, gathered under a neighboring awning, noticed the meeting just described. They saw nothing

outwardly very remarkable. Two persons, a man and a woman, encountered each other, recognized each other, spoke, shook hands, and then the man joined the woman and they walked rapidly away together. There was nothing very startling or romantic in this! But could these spectators have pierced through the breasts of this man and this woman; could they have seen the hearts of Charles and Hetty; could they have beheld the emotions there conflicting, they would have realized that truth is stronger than fiction.

Charles accompanied his new-found victim to her humble home. But little was said on the way, for the souls of both were too full for their lips to speak. Charles, especially, felt like a man in a dream. His emotions were in a whirl. He knew not what he did.

They reached C—— court, the quiet little street where Hetty lived. They turned down the court; they reached the door of Hetty's home; they entered the house. They were alone; alone in Hetty's little parlor, where she kept all her choicest specimens of needle-work.

"Oh, I am so glad I have met you at last!" she cried. "I have been looking for you so long!"

"Looking for me so long!" repeated Charles. "I had given you up as dead!"

"No, not dead, thank God!—at least not yet. But I could not bear to live at home, amongst my own people in shame, Charles. I overheard your wicked friend, one day, advising you not to keep your promise to me, your promise to marry me; you remember THAT, don't you?"

"Yes," said Charles, simply. It was all he could say. Good God! he did indeed remember.

"I was afraid you would take his advice, and would not keep your faith with poor me!" she continued, "and so I left home in haste, and have never seen or heard from my aunt or uncle, with whom I lived, since. They think me dead, I hope. I came to New York to seek you. I feared that I had done you wrong, that I had been foolish; that had I not left home, but waited

and seen you once more, you would not have followed your friend's bad counsel, but would have kept your promise to me, and made me your wife. I knew that you were not a wicked, but a noble man—my heart told me so. And my heart also told me, 'Seek for him. Find him. He will keep his pledge to you yet.' And I have found you at last. Oh, Charles, think not meanly of me for the confession, but I love you still. See, what I have done." So saying, she put her hand beneath the bosom of her dress and drew from thence a delicate, fine, lace handkerchief of the smallest size, but most exquisite workmanship. "You remember this, do you not?" she said. "'Tis the one you gave me. I have worn it next to my heart ever since. And see—I have embroidered your name and mine together in this corner. It cost me several days just to embroider those few letters."

And, to tell the truth, the work was most magnificent—one of the finest and most fanciful possible specimens of needle-work. Charles remembered the handkerchief well. Still he said nothing. But, not taking any note of his silence, she continued:

"Charles—dear Charles—now, that I have found you, you will keep your promise to me, will you not? It is years since you gave the promise, it is true. But what of that? The remembrance of what you have made me will last all my life. Surely your faith with me ought to last that long also. Oh, if you did but know how I have hoped and yearned to be some day your wife. I feel that I can never regain my lost honor until I stand beside the altar with you. I dare not die, or think of dying, until that time comes. It is only as your wife that I can lift up my eyes and look those around me in the face without shame. It is only thus that I can forget my sorrow that is killing me. It is only as your wife that I dare to pray. To marry you, and to wipe away by marriage my early sin; this has been for years, by day and by night, my wish, my hope, my life itself. Oh! I will make you a good wife, believe me, Charles. I will love you and serve you, as never woman loved and served hus-

band before. I will, at least, try not to disgrace you, Charles. Poor girl, as I am, I have endeavored, for years, to make myself as worthy as I can to be your wife. You *will* keep your word, then, Charles—will you not? The word you gave me when *I gave you all!*"

She pled as earnestly to the man, Charles Singerly, to marry *him*, as ever man had plead to woman to be allowed to marry *her*. Her whole soul was in her petition. Gentle in all things else, in this point she was fire itself. And how imagine you felt Charles, as she thus addressed him and implored him? Let our lady-readers think a while, and answer. This passionate love for, his plighted troth to, Julia on the one hand; and the startling glimpse of his duty to Hetty Thorpe, upon the other. Still he said nothing. She noticed now his silence.

"You do not speak. Surely you cannot mean to play me false, to break your faith with me when I placed all my faith in you? But—ah! perhaps *she* was mistaken—or did not tell me truth when she said you were not married—or that she was merely your *friend*. Yes—she must have deceived me."

"*She—who?*" asked Charles, in wonder.

"The lady who has been so kind to me, and to whom I have confided my sorrow. Ah! how ungrateful I am. She never could have deceived me."

"But who is this 'she,' whom you say has spoken to you of me?" inquired Charles.

"Ah, perhaps I should not tell you," was the reply.

"But I have a right to know," continued her companion.

"She is a good, kind young lady, who has been a benefactress to me. She is stately to look at. She seems like a queen; but she is not at all proud. Oh, no—so mild and so generous."

"And you say she spoke to you of me; you say she knows me?" interrogated Charles.

"Oh, yes," cried Hetty; and then added hastily, perhaps incautiously,—"she carries your likeness with her."

"My likeness with her!" cried Charles; and then he exclaimed, a sudden and horrible suspicion suggesting itself to his mind:

Heaven's! can it be? No—and yet—— Tell me her name."

"Her name is Miss Witherson, Miss Julia Witherson," was the reply.

Yes; his suspicion was true; and Julia, his adored Julia, by a most strange chance, had heard of his infamy. He fell back like one startled; like one who was in mortal fear.

"You are ill," cried Hetty Thorpe.

"Oh, no," he murmured.

"Then it must be this woman," said his companion. "What can she be to you?"

"No matter what!" he cried.

The hope had occurred to him that perhaps after all Julia had not learned the full story of his guilt.

"What did you tell her of me?" he inquired, eagerly. "Does she know that I—that I——" He paused, scarcely knowing how to phrase the question, though the reader can imagine what he intended it to be.

"She knows all—all my story, and your connection with it. I told her all before I was aware that she was acquainted with you."

"You told her, then, that I—that I——" Again he faltered.

"I told her *we* had erred. But I also told her that I believed in your honor, nevertheless; I told her that I knew you would not have trifled with your promise to me had it not been for your friend."

"She knows then that I promised to marry you!"

"Yes."

"Oh, God!" he cried.

It was not blasphemy, reader, his use of those two words. It was merely the natural exclamation of the stricken heart.

Whenever the human creature encounters one of the crises of emotion which, in the path of life, must occasionally be met, he or she instinctively cry out "Oh, God!"

"It is all over," groaned Charles. "My sin has found me out. She, my Julia, knows of my guilt. Our dreams are dreamed out now. I cannot bear this agony."

"Stay," cried Hetty, rising, as she saw her companion advance hastily towards the door,—"you will not leave me *now*?"

"Oh, I want air. I will stifle if I remain. I must go."

"But you will return, will you not?"

"Yes; I will call upon you—soon—to-morrow—any time; but let me leave you now. I want time—time to think, and," he added, in a lower tone, "strength—strength to suffer."

"Oh, I so fear I will not see you again!" said Hetty.

"Have I not promised to return?" cried Charles. "It will not be broken, like a former promise. Farewell."

And, so saying, he rushed from the apartment. While Hetty Thorpe remained behind, and asked herself two questions,—"Will he come back?" and "What can this woman, this Julia Witherson, be to him?"

Had a man about this time stood near C—— court, he would have seen a young, handsome, well-dressed individual, evidently a gentleman, issue hastily forth from one of the humblest houses in this little street. He would also have seen that this gentleman must have been laboring under great mental excitement, for, though he walked hurriedly from the house, he seemed wholly unconscious of the fact that it was raining; for, despite of the umbrella carried mechanically under his arm, he suffered himself to be thoroughly drenched by the pelting shower.

Had our observiug man followed this eccentric individual, he would have seen that the latter had left C—— court, and had proceeded some distance from it, before he noticed the rain. And that then, opening his umbrella, with an exclamation that sounded part groan and part curse, he walked on more rapidly than ever.

And, of course, our man who saw all this would conclude that our aforesaid eccentric individual was either very absent-minded, or, more probably, was undergoing great mental trouble. In this last supposition, he would have been very correct; but still he probably never would have imagined how severe the trouble, how sharp the soul-agony of Charles Singerly was!

In fact, our hero was hardly, as yet, aware of its extent himself. His whole mental being was in a whirl. He had suffered

a shock, a great shock, and had not yet recovered from the first stunning effect of the blow. He felt agony, it is true; but he scarcely was aware how much.

At last, in the midst of the pelting, dreary rain, Charles Singerly reached home. He still retained the fine old house in which his father had lived, and his own boyhood had been spent; and, on reaching it, he immediately retired to his "study," and locked the door. This "study" was the same room in which years ago he had wept bitter though manly tears at what he then deemed was his final separation from Julia. And now he felt as though he could weep again. For was he not again separated from her? Did she not know of his baseness? Did she not know that he was under a promise of marriage to another? Did she not think him dishonorable and treacherous?

"No," he mentally cried, "she makes allowance for me doubtless. She treats my error as I have treated hers. If she knows all the circumstances she will not think so evil of me. But perhaps she does *not* know all. Then I shall tell her. Come what else will, she shall, at least, hear my own story from my own lips, and shall not blame me more than I deserve. But even if she will pardon my error, will she love me still? Yes, yes; I feel it in my heart she will. But will she *marry* me? Will she consent to be my wife, knowing that years ago I pledged myself to marry another, and that this other now holds me to my pledge? Oh, God! this is *the* question. How shall I answer it? And what am I to do? What *should* I do? What *shall* I do? Julia and I, how we have loved each other; how we *do* love, and ever shall! She has a claim upon me. All my hopes, my joys, all center upon her. I have a duty to perform, the duty to love her and reward her love. Her best good and mine depend upon our union. Our very lives will be incomplete without each other. And must we wreck our mutual life-long happiness, and pure, warm love because a ghost of the past has visited us? Must what *is* and what *may be*

yield to the phantom of what *has been*? No, never. Let all else be as it may, whatever we may have been, whatever we may have done, we love, are fitted for, and are betrothed to each other. All else must yield to this. No, I never will give thee up, oh, Julia!"

And he rose from the seat into which he had thrown himself, and paced his luxuriously-furnished study to and fro. There, on all sides of him were arranged on their proper shelves the works of dead and living authors. But the living, agitated human being, who owned them all and had studied them all, heeded them not. What are authors or books to human souls in strong emotion?

"No, Julia," he cried, unconsciously aloud, "we will never yield each other up! We will never suffer aught on earth but death to part us! What claim after all has Hetty Thorpe upon me? I would have redeemed my ill-starred promise to her. I strove to find her in order to fulfil it, but she fled from me. I thought her dead. I had every reason to think her so; and now she comes, as it were, from the grave to blast me. But what of that? I have made other and holier pledges *since*. My old promise (forfeited by her own act, her voluntary disappearance for years) is no longer binding. I do not love her; I cannot love her; I love another; we are not suited to each other socially, intellectually, or in any other manner. I have no right to render Julia and myself wretched for life to gratify an unreasonable claim of Hetty Thorpe. It is asking too much of human nature. What have I done more than most young men? Nothing. All men have erred with women at least *once* in their lives. But few have repented as I have. Why should I then be punished more than others? Why, truly?"

And Charles Singerly paused as though expecting a reply; but no sound was audible save the ceaseless pattering of the rain upon the roof of the piazza that was located directly back of the study. It is a dreary sound, that of the falling rain-drops; they have a mournful undertone that fills the

heart with sadness. It speaks of desolation. Still it can scarcely be considered as a definite answer to a definite question; and Charles Singerly, therefore, may be said to have received no reply to his just-recorded inquiry.

But, nevertheless, he *did* receive a reply, for his own *conscience* answered him; his own honor replied to him. These told him, that disguise the matter as he might, the simple truth was that he had betrayed a girl under promise of marriage; that now the poor creature claimed the only reparation in his power; and that Hetty Thorpe's claim to his hand, if not his heart, was paramount over all others. These told him that he was more than ever bound to fulfil his promise to Hetty, seeing how she still loved him, and how she longed for marriage with him as her only chance for happiness, repentance, aye, even salvation. These told him that his duty, his sacred duty, his feelings as a man, his honor as a gentleman, led him to keep faith with Hetty Thorpe, and that he could not be happy even with Julia Witherson, did he violate his duty to her unfortunate rival. Lastly, these told him, judging her by their own standard, that Julia herself would refuse to marry him under the circumstances, deeming that Charles' hand was no longer her property.

His own honor and his own conscience spoke thus to Charles Singerly; and he was obliged, in his own despite, to listen; he felt in his inmost soul that their voices uttered the truth; and yet these truth-telling voices nearly drove him mad. Where were now his hopes of future bliss with Julia? Gone for ever. Gone with Julia's self. For she was no longer his. He was no longer hers. They were parted for ever, parted by a promise and a sin—an old promise and a youthful sin.

How Singerly wrestled and struggled with himself for hours in his study! unseen but by Him in heaven; surrounded by naught but books and papers, poems and philosophies, and histories and manuscripts; with no sound

to disturb him, save the ceaseless patter of the mournful rain.

> "There are no battles on the earth
> So awful in their woe and worth
> As battles of the soul."

And how did this battle terminate? To what resolution did Charles Singerly arrive? We will tell you. He was *unable* to decide. Arguments and feelings led him to Julia; strong arguments and a certain share of feeling inclined him to Hetty Thorpe. So he resolved to cut if he could not untie the Gordian knot, or rather to have it cut by another. He resolved to leave the decision to Julia herself.

Yes; he would go to her at once; he would tell his story to her; confess all its evil; but, also, point out its brighter aspects. He would state his views to her; his arguments and feelings on both sides. He would ascertain what *her* views were on the matter; and then he would leave *her* to decide whether to accept or to discard him; whether to blame or to forgive him; whether he should fulfil his pledges to her, or his long-ago promise to another.

This may seem a remarkable resolution—a shifting of the responsibility; perhaps it was. We only know that *so* it was.

Charles Singerly left his study, in which he had now battled with himself for many hours, and noticing, for the first time, the damp condition of his garments, he went to his dressing-room and changed them.

He then came down stairs, and partook of a hasty dinner. But, though his soul was on fire, he had now regained his self-command; and when he kissed his mother "good-bye" after dinner, he looked into her loving face with a smile.

"Ah! I see, Charlie," said Mrs. Singerly, "that you are a faithful lover. Rain cannot damp your ardor."

"Why should it, mother?"

"That's right, my boy. Your father, when he was courting me, Charlie, long years ago, never heeded the weather. In fact, he took advantage of a rainy night to remain in my company longer than usual. Now—there is a hint for you to improve

upon to-night. Give Julia my love ; tell her to call and see me to-morrow. God bless you, my son, and may you have, in time, a child who will be to you all the comfort that you have been to me."

"All will be well with me yet," thought Charles. "I cannot be cursed when I have such a mother's blessing."

And, with this thought, he walked through the rain to the residence of Julia—the woman who now had, by hisown act, his fate in her hands.

It was a singular situation. He was to marry *one* of *two* women, as he was under promise to *both;* but he knew not, as yet, *which.* And now he was going to the house of one of these women to ask her whether he should marry her or the other.

CHAPTER V.

A STRANGE IDEA.

Evening was approaching, not with all its wonted paraphanalia of gorgeous sunset, pensive twilight, and the like; but with clouds and dreary rain. And Julia sat in the drawing-room of her uncle's home, awaiting her lover.

She was dressed with her usual good taste, and looked magnificently; but her face was paler than its wont, and her eyes, to use a phrase of a French poet, were "anxious eyes." She dreaded the coming interview with Charles; yet she felt that it was inevitable.

A ring was heard at the street-door; it was *his* ring—she had learned to know it well by this time.

Contrary to her usual custom, she did not answer it in person She could not summon strength, and so her lover was admitted by one of the servants of the establishment.

A step was heard—*his* step; he entered the drawing-room, and stood before her. He was attired in his wonted elegance, and seemed, as ever, the polished gentleman. But his face, like the sky without, was clouded.

The two gazed upon each other with an eager, sorrowful, and tender look, which well expressed the feelings of their hearts: eager to learn each other's views; sorrowful at the barrier which had risen between them; tender with all the memories of their past love.

Charles spoke first. There are two ways of "breaking a matter," or opening a subject of conversation. A brief, bold, direct way, which comes plainly to the point at once; or a more roundabout, delicate, indirect method, which suggests, and hints, and finesses. Both styles have their advantages; but Charles Singerly, in the present instance, adopted the former plan.

"You have seen Hetty Thorpe," he said,—"you know all."

In utter surprise and wonder (for, of course, Julia had, as yet, not the slightest knowledge of Charles' meeting with his early victim), our heroine gasped, rather than answered, "Yes."

"And you condemn me," continued Charles; "you deem me base and heartless; you regard me as a common betrayer and liar."

"Oh, no," she replied, earnestly; "I have formed excuses for you, as you have, in times past, done for me. You were young; you were tempted. She, herself, told me that she knew you would have kept your promise to her had she not disappeared."

"You do me but justice Julia," said her lover. "But let me tell you my story in detail."

He was, above everything else, anxious that she should be informed of all the extenuating circumstances in connection with this unfortunate affair, that she might think no more harshly of him than he deserved. Whether she determined to marry him, or to yield him to another, she should, at least, respect him and esteem him still.

And so he told her the history of his relations with Hetty Thorpe. How he had met her during one of his college rambles, had taken a great fancy to her, which for a while he really mistook for love; how, his moral and religious principles at that time being, like those of most young men, very lax, he had taken advantage of her attachment to him, thinking lightly of the matter, not intending to do the girl any injury, and deeming the whole matter a mere romantic episode; how the poor girl, *after* she had fallen, began to see things in a different light, and had begged him to marry her, and he, against his better judgment, but influenced by her solicitations and his own feelings, promised to do so. Henry Hericot, his most intimate college friend, who had also made the acquaintance of Hetty, and knew of Charles' intrigue with her and encouraged it, had vehemently dissuaded him from the idea of marrying her, representing to Charles forcibly all the worldly arguments against such a marriage. He, Charles, had resisted the arguments of his

friend, and sincerely desirous to atone for the wrong which he had done to the poor girl, and which he now began to see in its true light, would have fulfilled his pledge to her, but she had departed ; had disappeared from home, and was at last, after several months search, given up by her relatives as dead. He himself had searched for her long and zealously, but in vain. The memory of his conduct towards her had ever been one of his secret sorrows, and had completely changed his views and conduct in regard to women ; notwithstanding all his dissipation, he had never "intrigued" since the days of Hetty Thorpe, this error being his first and his last offence.

Julia listened to this explanation with mingled emotions of sorrow and joy—sorrow that her lover had sinned ; joy that his sin was thus extenuated—that spite of his error, he had been, as ever, noble. The idea also darted now through her mind that it might have been the thought of *his* own early indiscretion which had made Charles so forbearing and forgiving to her own youthful error ; and in this she guessed, as the reader knows, the truth.

"And now, Julia," asked Charles, when he had concluded his story, "do you condemn me as much as at first ? Do you think me base, mean, treacherous ? A libertine or a liar ?"

"Oh, no ! oh, no !" she replied. "I never deemed you these, dear Charles."

"Dear Charles !" She had become, of late, so accustomed to these words, that she now spoke them, as it were, almost mechanically. He was *still* "dear" to her. He never could be otherwise.

"But how did you meet with—with Miss Thorpe ?" continued Julia.

Charles told her. There was a moment's silence, and then she spoke.

"Miss Thorpe loves you still," she said, addressing her lover. "She expects that you will marry her." Julia, if she had been paid at that instant a million dollars, could not have added another word.

"Oh, heaven!" thought Charles Singerly, "my sin has found me out. The folly of an hour, the folly of many a year ago, now returns to curse me. How beautiful Julia is, and yet I must now run the risk, the almost certainty, of losing her forever, because in a moment of mad infatuation, I yielded to a boy's temptation. This is, indeed, judgment."

He was correct. It was, indeed, "judgment." And confidentially, dear reader, let me tell you, these "judgments" almost inevitably overtake sin. For a while we may pluck, in our youth, the rose of transgression; but in our older years, we will be forced to feel the thorn of retribution.

Rapidly, earnestly, with all the eagerness and solemnity of one who is speaking words which will decide his lot for life, Charles laid his case before Julia. He stated, and he endeavored to state forcibly, fully, honestly, the claims which Hetty Thorpe justly held upon him. He also, with all the unrivalled eloquence of love (which to the ears of those concerned, sounds sweeter, grander than the periods of Sheridan or Webster), displayed in all their long array, the rights and claims of his listener upon his hand alike and heart. His early pledge; her long-enduring love; the debt of atonement due by him; all these led him to decide in favor of his past victim—of the woman who, in her humble home in C—— court, was longing for his return. While his betrothal vow; their fervent, mutual passion, which was but the culmination of years of patient love and suffering; and all their joint hopes of happiness and soul-improvement irresistibly impelled his decision to the side of his present mistress—of the woman who sat listening to him—of the woman whom three days ago he had hoped to call, in a few weeks, "wife." And having told all this, he cried:

"And now, *my* Julia—let me call you thus, even if it be for the last time—*I leave it for you to decide*, finally and fully. It rests with you to say whether my duties and obligations to you are greater or less than my obligations and my duties to her. I cannot determine this point for myself. All within me is confu-

sion. I confide in your wisdom, your love, and your honor. Oh ! tell me what I ought to do."

As he spoke, he gave her a glance at once piercing, entreating, sad and tender. And she looked so beautiful, so charming in her surprise at this most unexpected proposition—this leaving with *her* the responsibility of so grand a decision—that even as the words passed his lips, the mood of Charles changed. He felt it was *impossible*, on any terms, to surrender the possession of so delicious, so superb a being. And kissing her, with almost frantic vehemence, he exclaimed :

" I will not, I cannot, yield you up. I *have* decided. Though a very ghost were to rise from the grave to sunder us, yet would I not part from thee. It would be murder. The murder of my heart and thine. No, no ! Nothing past, nothing present or to come, shall part us."

In the excitement of the moment he threw his arms about her, and clasped her tightly, and oh, how tenderly to his breast ! Never had he loved her as he loved her now ; never had he before worshiped her as he now adored her. He kissed her ; he pressed her stately, tall, magnificent, and most graceful form, which now yielded to his ardor ; he called her every endearing name which the vocabulary of love could furnish ; he used all the argument that passion could suggest; and Julia's whole being was, for a space, in a whirl of intoxication, delight, and indecision.

She felt his kisses ; she heard his burning words ; she was enveloped, as it were, in his clasp.—Why should she decide for him? Why should there be any decision? What was Hetty Thorpe to them ? What was a past sin to a present love ? They were lovers, and in each other's arms. Who or what should sever them ? Should the reality of such an affection as theirs be disturbed by a fantastic notion of honor ? They could not live apart. Each was part of each. To separate them were, indeed, but "murder," and so they should *not* be separated. And Julia's lips responded to her lover's ; her beautiful arms wound themselves around his neck ; her head reposed upon his breast.

There and thus they sat; while Hetty Thorpe was in her little bed-room in C—— court, looking out upon the rain, and praying God to restore to her the man with whom she had loved and erred.

Julia was but human. She was tempted, and for a moment she yielded to the dear temptation. But her mood changed; her honor and her duty began to speak within her. She withdrew herself from her lover's embrace, and endeavored to restore herself to calmness.

He, Charles, had left it with her to decide whether, since the discovery of Hetty Thorpe, his heart (or at least his hand) was due to herself or to this Hetty. True, she could refuse to decide this question, and could replace the responsibility of answering it upon him. But, at any rate, she would have to be a party to this decision. There was much truth in Charles' statement of his position. There were strong arguments in favor of his abandoning her and devoting himself to his former victim. There were almost equally cogent reasons for his remaining faithful to his love and pledges to herself and not heeding the demands of Hetty. How should she determine in such a case as this? It was a most peculiar position. A woman asked by her lover to decide whether his love was due to herself or to her rival!

She sat in the elegant drawing-room, surrounded by all the luxuries of modern furniture and fashionable art, elegantly attired, yet most perplexed, most wretched; her mind in a fever, utterly indescribable. Arguments, pro and con (too numerous, and some of them too delicate, to mention, but which our lady-readers can readily imagine if they will but feel), rushing through her soul, while beside her sat her betrothed (if so we may now call him), at any rate, her lover, arrayed in the height of fashion, with the jewels on his delicate fingers sparkling in the gas-light, and his face handsome and most intellectual. But his spirit was troubled, as was the spirit of Saul when David was absent—his heart torn by conflicting thoughts and fears. And over their heads, upon the roof which sheltered them, fell steadily and mournfully the dreary rain—while not far off, amidst

that wilderness of houses called a city, sat Hetty Thorpe at her lonely window, looking out upon the night, and thinking of the false idol of her youth.

But suddenly, an idea, a novel, strange, yet a not utterly unpracticable idea, occurred to the mind of the agitated, perplexed Julia. Charles had transferred to her the responsibility of a decision which of right rested with himself. Why should not she, in her turn, transfer this assumed responsibility of hers to the account of another? Charles had trusted his fate to the award of Julia. Why should not the latter trust the fate of both to the decision of Hetty Thorpe herself? Yes, this was the idea that occurred to our heroine.

She considered its bearings and relations a moment. She reflected that she was unable herself to decide the question before her, relative to the duty of the man she loved under the peculiar circumstances by which he was surrounded. It was with her a case of conscience *versus* heart. But Hetty Thorpe was the one most interested; let *her* therefore decide. Perhaps she would be generous, and perform a greater feat than our heroine felt capable of—decide against herself. Perchance, Hetty would take pity upon the lovers, and not insist upon her lately asserted rights. At any rate, this plan would spare Julia one struggle After all, it was a matter more of impulse and feeling than reasoning. The idea rushed upon our heroine's mind, promising her a few hours delay, a change, a chance, and she adopted it almost at once—as eagerly as a drowning man catches even at a straw.

She suggested the idea to Charles. He started in wonder, and then (it would be difficult to tell why, as is often the case with human actions) agreed to the proposal. Yes, he would call, with Julia, upon Hetty Thorpe at once—this very night. He would tell her all; all his love for Julia, all Julia's love for him, all the ties which bound them to each other. And then he would appeal to the woman whom he had betrayed in favor of the woman to whom he was betrothed. And by the decision of the former he would be guided. The crisis of their fate was at hand. Let them approach it at once. Let them go seek it now.

Unfortunate couple! They loved, and were betrothed to each other; and yet they were now going to leave it to the decision of a third party whether their love-engagement should cease or continue. Charles knew that he must soon marry, yet he did not know whom he should wed, and had no option in the matter. He knew whom he loved, but not whether it was lawful to love her. And the decision on these points rested with a woman who loved him, but whom he did not love, though he ought to do so. While Julia knew not whether in twenty-four hours she should be re-betrothed to the man she loved, or whether her betrothal should be ended, and even her love be made unlawful. It rested entirely with another woman to decide. And this woman the one who loved and had a prior claim upon the very man to whom she was betrothed.

A delicate and peculiar situation truly!

CHAPTER VI.

LOVING ONE AND LOVED BY TWO.

Charles and Julia, notwithstanding the rain, sally forth to visit Hetty Thorpe, Charles carefully protecting his companion from the shower.

No mortal beholder, seeing them in so unromantic and matter-of-fact position, would imagine the tumults of their souls, or would guess at the wild super-romantic object of their expedition.

So little do we mortals know of one another!

They walk rapidly onward; not a star looks down upon them from heaven. Even the lamps shed but a weak and melancholy light upon the streets of earth; and their hearts are on fire with fear, hope, impatience, love, sorrow, and a world of other and mingled emotions.

They reach C—— court; they knock at the door of the house in which Hetty Thorpe resides; and Hetty herself admits them.

She is surprised, as well she may be; but she greets Julia respectfully, gratefully, and smiles lovingly upon Charles. And Julia sees that smile, and it sends a jealous pang to her heart. They enter Hetty's little parlor, that cosy, humble little parlor, the only adornments of which are specimens of the occupant's exquisite needle-work, and they seat themselves; and then for a space there is an embarrassed silence.

At last Charles opens the conversation by at once saying what he has come to say. He tells Hetty all his story as it concerns herself, and as it concerns Julia. He tells her that he sought for her years ago to fulfil his pledge, but could not

find her, and that now he has learned to love another, to whom he is also pledged.

"I liked you," he says; "I really thought at first that I loved you, but I have since learned what love is; and I know now that I love you not. *She* loves me; she to whom I am betrothed loves me even more fondly than you. You cherish but a fancy, a memory; she has been a part of me for years. Our happiness for life is centred in our union with each other; but I acknowledge your prior claim. In a moment of wild temptation we years ago both erred, and I wronged you. This error, this wrong led me to a promise of atonement, which I am now here to fulfil if you demand. I will be to you a true and kind husband, but I cannot be a *loving one*. My heart of hearts must be through life another's. Still you shall be my wife in the face of all the world. I am content so—so is Julia if needs be. Misery is no argument against duty; and now it is for you to decide *my* fate, *our* fate. Think not of us; do what seems to you best for yourself; we shall be satisfied with your decision whatever it may be; we shall not blame you even in our most secret thoughts. You once sacrificed all for me. I am now prepared to sacrifice all, love itself, and her I love, and all the happiness of life for you."

Hetty Thorpe listened, and now came the time of *her* temptation. The great wish of her life was ripe for its fulfilment, its realization as it were, hung like a rich fruit within her grasp. Why should she not reach forth her hand and pluck it, and bring it to her bosom? Why not, truly? Why should she not marry Charles Singerly? Let them say what they would, she, Hetty Thorpe, loved him as truly as did Miss Julia Witherson; and she had loved him much longer. She had adored Charles Singerly before Julia Witherson had even so much as met him. And if he loved her not now, why, then, he was false to his early pledge, and that was no fault of hers; and she would teach him in time to love her once more.

Her rights were indisputable. She had all the claims of the loving and the wronged. It was her *duty* to wed him. Repentance, atonement, virtue demanded it. The very peace of her present and all the joy of her future were centered in her union with him. Providence, most unexpectedly, after years of separation, had brought them together. Let her accept the blessing of God. She, Hetty Thorpe, would make as good and as true a wife as would Julia Witherson, or any other woman on the earth. She could not live and see him another's. These and kindred thoughts flashed through the mind of Hetty as she listened to the words of Charles.

And she smiled, partly in love, partly in bliss, and partly in triumph. There was silence for a moment; naught was to be heard but the beating of those three hearts, and the patter of the rain, and the ticking of a little clock which stood upon the mantle-piece.

It was a strange and startling status. Two lovers waiting for the fiat which was to doom their love for ever; a fiat to be pronounced by a judge of their own appointment—a judge, too, who was virtually interested in the matter.

There could be no doubt as to the sentence. Julia and Charles looked on Hetty, and then glanced sadly, despairingly upon each other; and then Hetty Thorpe said, "Charles, I cannot, will not yield you up. You are mine by right, and I will yet make you mine by love. You shall yet——"

Here she suddenly paused. She was struck with the anguish, the anguish not to be concealed, impressed upon the countenances of her visitors. It seemed to her a new revelation. It spoke louder than any words. And her spirit was troubled. Her nobler nature contended with the selfish decision she had just expressed. She remembered, all at once, how kind, how very kind Miss Witherson had been to her. And was she to requite her by rendering her miserable for life? She saw, she was forced to see, that Charles Singerly loved her not. And was she to accept a hand without a

heart? She was compelled to acknowledge that our heroine was more fitted by birth, education and position to be the wife of Charles than she herself. She might be first, but Julia was *most*.

Beside, Hetty was, though gentle, yet capable of a high nobility of thought and action (many "gentle" people are), and the noble voice in her soul said:

"If Julia is willing to abandon love for honor, should not I be willing also? Shall she be more generous, more self-sacrificing, more truly loving than I? How can I be happy with him if I know that I am making both him and her wretched forever? Would it not be merely adding another sin to my number thus to separate those who love, and to wed one who loves me not? If he has learned to love another, whose fault is it but my own, for rushing from him, as I did, and forcing him, as it were, to forget me? Can it be a *true* atonement that will render two miserable and myself *not* happy? No!"

These thoughts darted through the mind of Hetty Thorpe with the rapidity of lightning. It took not half the time to feel them that it consumes to record them.

And Charles and Julia wondered why the judge had not finished her last sentence; they wondered why she sat silently there, her face flushing with contending emotion. What could it all mean? But the brief though intense silence is broken once more.

"Do you love *him*?" asks Hetty of Julia, pointing with her forefinger to Charles.

"I do," is the simple response of Julia, who is amazed at the abrupt and, at this stage, seemingly needless interrogatory of her companion.

"You cannot be a truly happy woman without him? He is your hope of heart, your life of soul, your next to God?" continues her examiner.

"Why do you ask her this? Why thus torture her for naught?" interrupts Charles, passionately.

"Because I do *not* intend to torture her or you," is the reply. "I here and now re——"

She paused again. For the second time she left the sentence incomplete. "Renounce" was probably the word she intended to pronounce; but she pronounced it not. A new idea occurred to her mind. A strange thought flashed over the electric wires of her spirit. She reflected upon it a moment. The decision was a favorable one. The new thought was, if not welcomed, at least adopted. Hetty Thorpe suddenly exclaimed:

"Call upon me in three days; but leave me now."

"Three days!" cried Charles.

"Three days!" echoed Julia.

"Yes," replied Hetty. "Give me three days, and I will give you my answer, my final answer. And now, good-night. I would be alone."

Wondering, fearing, yet hoping; astonished, yet not wholly despairing, Julia and Charles departed out into the storm and the night.

But just as his foot was on the threshold of the street-door, Hetty Thorpe rushed to our hero and kissed him.

It did not seem a kiss of passion, but of peace; a kiss with more of spiritual than of sensual emotion in it. And the look which accompanied it had not more of earthly affection than of almost heavenly sweetness.

The kiss was given; the door was closed; and her visitors were gone.

The rain pattered, the clock ticked. Hetty retired to her bedroom, and locked the door.

And sounds, partly of weeping, partly of supplication, were heard from there not long after.

CHAPTER VII.

LOVE'S LAST.

THREE days have passed, and Charles and Julia once more are in the presence of Hetty, anxious to learn their fate—fully appreciating their most singular position.

Charles' handsome face is pale. Julia's intellectual countenance is, on the contrary, somewhat more flushed than usual. The reason of this physical difference may be accounted for by the dissimilarity of their present emotions. Charles regards the coming interview with dread; while Julia looks forward to it with a wild, unaccountable, yet real hope. *Why?*

They wait for Hetty in her little parlor, and mechanically examine her specimens of needle-work, but they speak but little to each other. People seldom do when they feel much.

At last, Hetty makes her appearance. She is really beautiful this morning; and there is a glow of excitement upon her face, a restless agitation in her manner (which she vainly endeavors to conceal), and a vague, *spirituelle* look in her eyes which attract irresistibly the attention of her visitors. What does it all portend? No matter; they will soon know.

Hetty salutes her visitors politely, kindly—shaking hands with them both. Charles and Julia are fearfully embarrassed; but Hetty, though by no means calm, seems determined, and, consequently, comparatively at her ease. Her mind is evidently "made up," and she does not keep her companions long in suspense. The agony is soon over.

After a brief, very brief, and unsatisfactory attempt at general conversation, Hetty announces her ultimatum.

"Charles," she says, turning to Singerly, and looking full into his eyes, with those loving and now so strange orbs of hers,—

"Charles, I claim my right—your promise. I must be your wife. I cannot, must not, live or die, save as your wife, my Charles."

That word "my," when used by a woman, and by her applied to a man—how full of meaning it is! How happy it makes the man!—under favorable circumstances. But when it asserts a right, which he is not at all anxious to concede; when it is spoken by the wrong woman—how wretched the man! And when the right woman, the woman whom the man loves, stands by and hears *another* woman, whom the man does *not* love, assert a claim to the man of her heart, which he dare not resist, how utterly wretched that woman! How horribly sounds, then, that little sweet word "my!"

It is all over. Charles' fears have been proved true. Julia's hopes have been proved false. The shock is past. They know the worst. Their futures must be separate and sad; but they must do their duty; and Charles, who, years ago, committed the sin, must now bear the punishment.

And why not? Julia Witherson sinned, and was punished. Why should Charles Singerly sin and go unpunished? Is not *his* sin as great as hers? Certainly. True, the world does not think so; but it is time that the world was taught to think better. The real truth is, that a man who errs is as bad as a woman who errs. Crime has no sex; and in the eye of God an immoral *male* is as guilty as an immoral *female*. And both being alike guilty, both should alike suffer, aye, and will suffer, if not here, why then hereafter!

Charles Singerly suffers here, and now. But he recovers himself, and replies to Hetty in the simple but expressive words:

"Then, I am yours!"

Four short words; but they are the saddest that Julia Witherson has ever heard. They contain the death-warrant of her love, her holy, happy love. And the glow of false hope is succeeded upon her fine countenance by the pallor of a real despair!

Hetty Thorpe now breaks the silence anew, and says: "Do not think me selfish. Do not think me ungrateful!"

"Oh, no!" Julia forces herself to reply, though the words almost choke her. "Oh, no; you but claim a right—a duty."

"Oh, no," reëchoes Charles; "you but demand your own—your own!"

The tone of utter wretchedness in which these two last words are spoken is totally indescribable.

And then, once more, there is a moment's silence. And two sad and separated hearts, which love, and yet must love no longer, beat loudly in the solemn stillness.

> "They uttered not a word—
> But the beating of their own hearts
> Was all the sound they heard."——

Saving the ticking of the little clock previously referred to. Stray gleams of the sunlight without steal through the window-panes, but utterly unheeded. Julia looks upon Charles, and Charles looks upon Julia, and Hetty Thorpe looks upon them both. And no one of the three speaks. Could you but see the mutual glances of Charles and Julia. Love, sorrow, happy but useless memories, a wretched prospect of a blighted future; a struggle at resignation on her part, remorse on his, are expressed in their eyes and faces. Strongest of all these is the love. They may be parted by fate and by duty; but they can never, never, never do aught but love one another. Their mutual passion has become a part of their very nature, and nothing but death can destroy it.

Does Hetty Thorpe, who watches her companions with a look of pity, pride, love, and wild determination, combined with an undefinable spirituelle expression, realize the fact that the two beings whom her words have separated in body, can never be separate in heart?

Julia sits upon a petite sofa, the only piece of pretentious furniture in the apartment. Charles rises in his agitation and walks to and fro through the little parlor. He passes, mechanically, his fingers through his hair, a way he has when disturbed. His thoughts are now of a ring and a chain; of a ring that is on Julia's finger, a ring he gave her, but which must not be

worn any longer ; of a chain that hangs round her neck, and to which is suspended his likeness. But that likeness is now the property of another ; and the love which chain and ring alike signify, must be crushed as a crime. Oh, God ! it is very hard !

Suddenly he pauses from his pacing to and fro, and looks upon Julia, with an expression indescribable, but which she understands. They can endure their agony no longer. They rush into each other's arms, murmuring words, broken sentences, which only their own ears and those of heaven can hear. They clasp each other tightly, fondly. They kiss each other's eyes, and cheeks, and lips. They call each other by every name of fond endearment. Julia's superb form is encircled by her lover's, her *once* lover's, aye, her *still* adorer's embrace. His ring-sparkling fingers are passing and repassing nervously through her long, dark, rich hair. And upon the hand which Julia places on his shoulder gleams in the sun-light her betrothal circlet. How they love each other !

And Hetty Thorpe stands beside the mantle-piece, near the little clock, which ticks unheeding on, and smiles as she beholds the wretched lovers. Aye, smiles a wild, mysterious smile. Has she no heart ?

But now she advances to the lovers ; her mood changes. In a sudden she opens her arms, and for a moment holds both Charles and Julia in her embrace, as though she were a parent blessing, and not a rival parting them.

What means this ?

Julia instinctively withdraws from Charles' arms. She cannot endure an embrace which is shared by her successful, her ungenerous rival.

Charles, too, looks up at Hetty, with a glance which says : "Could you not allow me one last farewell ?"

But Hetty Thorpe now speaks, and utters words which startle her hearers almost as much as that solemn command spoken by Him of old, which startled the wondering Jews, when He cried—"Lazarus, come forth !" For the words she pronounces

recall from its grave the corpse of their Love and Hope, and give it a new life and being :

"Be sad no more. You two shall be husband and wife ere long."

Had she said, "You two shall be emperor and empress of the world," it would be nothing to what she *has* said.

Julia's face flushes, like lightning ; Charles' eyes re-gleam , they are enraptured—but full of wonder.

"For heaven's sake, oh tell us truly what you mean !" cries Singerly.

"Listen to me," says Hetty Thorpe.

Needless request. It might thunder louder than the artillery which levelled the famous old walls of Sumter, but Charles and Julia would heed it not. They have but ears for her—for Hetty Thorpe, who stands before them, looking upon them with love and pity, with her usually pale face now slightly glowing with internal excitement, and her eyes illumined with a *spirituelle* fire.

And Hetty continues :

"I have been, as you know, for a long time in failing health. Until recently, I thought that shame and sorrow were the leading causes of this ; though, of course, I was aware that my bodily system was also, in some respects, disordered. But at our last interview, suddenly there came to my mind the memory of a certain mysterious phrase I had heard a student of medicine use in reference to my case. I dismissed you. I went the next day and consulted privately one of the leading medical men of this city. He explained to me the full meaning of the student's mysterious expression. In short, he told me what I now tell you. I am afflicted with an incurable internal disorder, which must soon end my days on earth. Nothing can alter this. Medicine may somewhat prolong my life, but I must die shortly, and may die at any moment. Now do you not understand me, Charles? Now do you not do me justice, Julia ? Do you not now comprehend my seeming selfishness ? I have but a little while to live. I wish to live that little happily ; and then I will leave you, and

you will be each other's again forever. I must soon depart; I wish to have my shame wiped out before I go; I wish to die, Charles, *in your arms*, as I have longed to do all these weary years; thus will I die happily. I wish to die as your *wife;* thus will my disgrace be atoned, my sin pardoned; thus, will I die honorably; thus, will I be enabled humbly, but confidently, to stand before my Judge; thus, will I bo able to meet my mother *there!*"

She looks upward, and the wild, spiritual look in her eyes is more conspicuous; but it is now accounted for. It is derived from the heavens, to which she is fast approaching. Knowing that she has but a brief space to be upon earth, she is becoming unearthly. Even her love to Charles is more of a spiritual and poetic than merely passionate character; she longs for a union with him chiefly upon moral grounds. Marriage is to her religion. But she proceeds:

"I wish you to wed me, Charles. I wish to call you mine, even though it be for a moment. I long to receive from you the embrace of a husband, and to feel that in its holy clasp our early errors are forgotten and forgiven. But do not fear. I shall not be a burden upon you long. Your marriage with me need not be public. You need not even live with me. I but wish to be in the sight of *God* your wife, not in the sight of man. I can support myself comfortably by my needle-work for a while. All I ask is that you be with me in the hour of death. Be a husband to me *then*. Let me *die* in your arms, even if I do not *live* in them. Thus shall I die happy, pure, forgiven. And, after my death, you two shall wed each other—and be blest; but do not entirely forget poor Hetty Thorpe."

She paused, through excess of emotion; and Charles and Julia said not a word. They could not speak. A mingled tide of conflicting feelings rushed through their souls. But Hetty resumed:

"I shall be glad to die: glad, because in being your wife I will have tasted all the bliss of earth; glad, because I can leave you to be happy here, and in the future meet you both above!

But see to it, Charles, *my* Charles, (you will let me call him 'my Charles' *now*, will you not, Julia?) see to it, that I am buried, not in some city graveyard, midst all the din and dust of a town, but lay what remains of me in the country ; place me under the flowers ; let me have some quiet nook in some village churchyard, all to myself. And do you and your wife come and visit me there. Spare a moment ever and anon from your living happiness to think upon your dead Hetty."

How shall we attempt to portray the emotions of the two who listened to all this? Wonder at the strange nature of the communication made to them ; admiration at the generosity of the speaker; a kind of mysterious reverence for her, as one already stamped, as it were, by the seal of death, mingled with a tender human pity; these feelings possessed the breasts of Charles and Julia alike.

Our hero himself was deeply touched by the passionate love manifested for him by Hetty Thorpe, and his noble nature was moved to respond to her generosity ; his honor, too, spoke loudly and clearly of his plain, evident duty to this ill-starred woman, the duty of marriage, now doubly dutiful.

And yet (for Charles Singerly was human, and there is a dark side to humanity), down in the bottom of his heart, in one of its corners, lurked a secret, wild joy at the idea that come what might, he could not be separated from his Julia long ; that his marriage with Hetty Thorpe (to which even now he felt a bitter repugnance), if it ever took place, would be but a temporary affair. We know not but that Julia Witherson shared in this joy with him ; but we *do* know that this disgraceful, though most natural sentiment, was crushed at once in the hearts of both as soon as it appeared, and was driven back with shame into the recesses of the soul, while the nobler and truer emotions reigned supreme.

But both Charles and Julia were silent (their minds were too full for their mouths as yet to speak) ; and Hetty Thorpe misinterpreted this stillness. She looked Charles sadly in

the face and said, in a tone of touching reproof, "Ah! I thought that you would appreciate my position, that you would understand me. I believed" (here her voice grew louder, and she spoke more rapidly) "you would have pity for me even if you had no love—that you would, at least, preserve your own honor by redeeming mine—that an hour's ceremony and a nominal bond, whose fetters would be concealed, and could at worst bind you but a little while, would not so disgust you as to render you forgetful of pity and your promise. But I have judged you wrongly, and yet I blame you not. I will not insist upon my rights. I will not decide your fate as you yourself but three days since proposed. No; you are free. I now make you so. Free from all pledge or obligation to me. Go! Marry her you love, and forget me forever! I can die pure, pure in heaven's sight, even though I be *not* your wife. God will forgive me, if man will not. Leave me and be happy, and think not of me, for I will soon, I trust, be dead."

During this Charles and Julia had each of them endeavored to interrupt the speaker, but in vain. Hetty spoke with such rapidity, such earnestness (growing more and more excited as she proceeded), that interruption was impossible; but as she uttered the concluding sentences her voice fell again, and now Charles Singerly spoke.

"Forgive me," cried he, "for my silence; but indeed it was not caused by what you think. I could not speak; my heart was too full; but I *must* speak now. I must——"

"No, Charles," broke in Hetty, "no, Charles, perhaps after all I have been selfish in my wish to marry you. But, indeed, I never thought of making our marriage public, or of living with you; and besides I knew that I could not live long."

"Nay, talk not that way; you shall live, and I shall be your husband."

"What!" cried Hetty, joyfully, "will you, indeed, keep your promise? Will you make me your wife?"

"Yes, so help me heaven!" replied Singerly solemnly.

His struggle, his mental conflict was now all over. He would do his duty, he would follow the dictates of honor at all hazards.

"And will you allow your lover to become my husband?" asked Hetty, turning to Julia.

"I will be ashamed to think that ever I loved him were he to refuse," was Julia's reply. *Her* mental struggle, too, was over. She, too, was resolved to do her duty, though her heart should break. "Justitia fiat, ruat cœlum."

"And you shall not die," cried Charles; "the best medical attendance shall be procured. No expense shall be spared to——"

He paused. Suddenly, like a flash of lightning, the thought rushed across his mind that now he was a *poor* man. The separation from Julia, on which he had resolved, consequent on his contemplated marriage with Hetty Thorpe, took from him all claim upon the wealth of Miss Witherson, upon which he and his mother had for some time lived. He had no money, no profession of his own.

"No, no," said Hetty Thorpe, replying to his last words, "all the wealth, and all the physicians on earth, cannot save me; otherwise I had not asked you to marry me. Charles, I accept your promise. You shall be my husband while I live. But two things I insist upon—I demand."

"Name them," cried Charles.

"Name them," reiterated Julia.

"First," said Hetty Thorpe, "our marriage must be private. You must not be known as my husband, otherwise your prospects in life would be injured. Do you promise me this, Charles?"

"I do," he replied, deeply touched by her generosity.

"Second, you two must promise me, here and now, that within six months after my death you will wed each other. Do you promise this also? Nay, no words" (seeing that they were about to interrupt her), "do you promise me this?"

"I do."

"And I."

"Then, Charles, at last you are mine, and I am yours, and all in honor. I know I am not your wife *yet*, Charles; but I have a foolish fancy. Indulge it. Let me hear you call me your wife. I am not yet, I know, but I will be. So call me your wife just once, Charles!"

"My wife, my Hetty," cried Charles, and he embraced her.

"Come, join us in our embrace," cried Hetty to Julia; "for you are of us. You are my sister till I die, and then you are my husband's wife."

And Julia, Charles and Hetty were wrapped in a triple embrace.

Here was a woman not yet married to a man, calling him her husband; while another woman, who was, till a moment ago, plighted to this man, and whose betrothal contract has not yet been formally annulled, looked on and embraced them both.

Here was a man who did not love a woman, surrendering for her sake the woman whom he did love, while this latter woman approves of his action, and the former accepted him, fully aware of his attachment elsewhere.

Here was a man who has to marry one woman immediately, and on her death to marry another one specified—both women agreeing to the arrangement.

Here was a woman who is about to marry a man as a religious duty, as an atoning ceremony, more than as a matter of the heart, though she loves him deeply.

Here was a woman, who at the time of her wedding is arranging for her funeral.

Here was a woman, who, though betrothed to a man, yields him to another, though under contract with him to become his second wife at the death of his first.

Certainly fate delights, occasionally, in throwing men and women into most peculiar situations!

The three embrace. The man, who loves one of the women, and is to marry them both; and the two women, who both love him, and are both to marry him.

They stand in Hetty's little parlor, the walls of which are adorned with her handiwork. Their arms are intertwined, their faces are close together. The manly form of Charles, the proud, magnificent, graceful form of Julia, and Hetty's smaller and pliant figure, forming a group delightful for the eye to contemplate. The light hair of Hetty, and the dark locks of Julia; the lighter skin and the staid blue eyes of the former, and the darker complexion and large, black orbs of the latter, form a pleasing contrast—while the rays of sunlight steal in through the half-closed blinds, and dance about, as if in wonder at the scene they reveal.

There is a silence too deep for words. Then the three unloose their hold, and converse is resumed. But soon Hetty pleads fatigue, and making an appointment to meet again on the morrow, Charles and Julia are about to depart, when suddenly Hetty springs forward, seizes Charles' hand, and with a gentle force takes from the number of valuable rings which adorn his fingers one ring, a simple, plain gold one, and placing it on the wedding finger of her own hand, smiles and says to Charles:

"Now, darling, we are, at least in the sight of heaven, man and wife. We are wedded, and this shall be my wedding-ring." She kisses him fervently, bids him come in the morning, presses Julia's hand gently, and this interview is over.

* * * *

Charles and Julia walked towards the residence of the latter like people in a dream. They now began to realize the singularity of the scene just over; they now commenced to appreciate their own remarkable and embarrassing position.

On reaching Julia's residence, the two lovers (if so we can still call them) parted, each full of thoughts that could hardly be communicated, even to each other.

Julia retired to her room, and locked herself in. She remained there for several hours. We need not detail her reflections; suffice it to say, that could we have seen her at this time, we would have seen her on her knees.

(Happy is she who in tempests of the heart trusteth in heaven!)

As for Charles, his mind was in a tempest. He lived through the day; he went through the mechanical motions of life; to all outward appearance, he was as usual. But his soul was agitated to its very depths. His position and his prospects were so peculiar, his duties and his feelings so conflicting, his memories of the past, his status in the present, his probable fate in the future, so in turns possessed his spirit, that he scarcely knew where or what he was.

But the day passed on, as all days will, and night came, as it always does, and at last he retired, and ere he sought his couch—he, too, prayed.

(Happy is he who seeks heaven to counsel him 'midst the perplexities of earth.)

* * * * * * *

Let us return to Hetty Thorpe. After the door had closed upon the retreating forms of Charles and Julia, she sat for a while upon the settee in her little parlor, motionless as though turned into stone. Of what she thought, we know not; possibly she could not clearly have defined to herself her reflections, for after a crisis, thought is often for a while confused and irregular.

Whatever may have been her meditations, the entrance of one of her fellow-lodgers banished them for a season, and brought her back to the routine of common life.

But after the usual employments of the day were over, and the twilight approached, she returned to her cosy, though humble room, forgot all every-day affairs, and thought but of her past, her present, her future; her sins, her sorrows, her loves, her joys—her life, her death.

And while she thought, her hands were busied with the making of a dress—a *wedding-dress*. She had been employed upon this for many months. It had been a fancy of hers that if she ever met her betrayer, her Charles, he would marry her, and she had worked at this garment in the hope of their meeting. And now there would be need for a wedding-dress indeed "How

pure and white it is !" she said to herself, as she held it before her. And then the thought occurred, that white was the color not only of wedding-robes but of burial-garments. And she shuddered, for she remembered the doctor's words ; she was doomed, she must die soon, yes, soon, certainly, though she was to be so happy.

Oh, could she but live ! Oh, God, could she but live ! She was but a poor, weak, loving woman, and from her heart went up a bitter, agonizing prayer for life. Happiness was in her grasp, atonement was in her reach ; all she asked for was life to enjoy the one and perfect the other. Selfish though natural wishes arose with her. The great object, the fond dream of her existence was now on the point of being fulfilled—and must she die so soon after its fulfilment ? It was too much. She threw herself passionately upon her knees and prayed, her wedding-dress lying unheeded on the floor, and the last gleams of day stealing through the window.

But there was no answer given to her wild prayer, and soon her violent emotion subsided. The current of her feelings changed. It was better that her life was fated to be brief. Better for her, for Charles, for Julia—for all concerned. She would be happy in heaven, and she would leave *them* happy on earth. Whereas if she lived, all three would be miserable. If she lived, too, she might sin and suffer ; whereas an early death makes holy. She arose and faced her fate.

They came to call her to supper. But she declined ; she could not eat. So she remained in her little parlor. It grew darker ; she stooped and picked up her now neglected wedding-dress, and folded it up carefully, and carried it to her bed-room, which was directly back of the parlor, then returned and sat down.

Placing her hand accidentally in the bosom of her dress, she came in contact with the handkerchief which Charles Singerly had given her years ago, on a fatal night, the night which destroyed her peace. The memory of her shame came over her, and she wept, like Peter of old, bitterly. But the proud thought

that she was soon to be *his* wife—aye, was at this very moment his wife in the sight of heaven, quenched her fears. And as she felt the ring upon her finger—*the* ring which was the pledge of his engagement and of her honor—the ring which she had just taken from his finger, her wedding-ring—she smiled and thanked God in her heart of hearts.

Time rolled on. Twilight passed, and night came down over the earth. A faint reflection of the glorious moonlight penetrated sweetly and softly even into the narrow court where Hetty lived, and stole into her little parlor. Still she sat there, musing. The days of her childhood returned to her in memory ; the happy season of her girlhood revisited her ; a thousand incidents were borne to her recollection across the corpses of long-buried years.

A panorama, as it were, of her life was unrolled before her. Then the present, with its singular situations and relations, impressed itself upon her thoughts. Charles and Julia, and the matters connected with them occupied her mind. And then loomed up before her mental vision the future, with its near-coming joys, and behind them the awful shadow of an early death.

And still she sat in her little parlor, while the clock on the mantle-piece ticked on, and the specimens of needle-work, in which she took such pride, were thrown into the shadow, as they hung on the walls ; and faint but delicious glimpses of the moonlight without crept in through the half-drawn blinds. And never had she, in the whole course of her life, looked so charming as at the present moment.

Nine o'clock chimed forth the steeples of the city—nine o'clock struck the little clock ; still she sat in the moonlight, thinking. Ten o'clock—eleven o'clock—twelve o'clock ; still sat she, thinking, in the moonlight, and looking beautiful.

At last she rose, and retired to her bed-room. But whether her long quietude had fatigued her we know not, but certainly she was now seized by the very demon of unrest. She paced to and fro through her little, plainly-furnished, but neat bed-room ;

then she opened the door which communicated with the parlor, and still paced to and fro through both apartments. Actuated by what impulses we cannot tell, she paused with her candle in front of the various prints and specimens of needle-work, and examined each attentively. Then she looked at her "library," as she called it, a collection of about ten or a dozen books, opened them one by one, glanced at the fly-leaves, and read the pencilled words on them, recalling the little circumstances connected with each. Then she wound up the clock, arranged the articles of furniture in the parlor (there were not many to arrange); then went to a drawer of her bureau, in her bed-room, took from thence the miniature of her father, a lock of her long-dead mother's hair, one or two other family relics, kissed them tenderly, and replaced them.

Then she took from another drawer a small letter-box, and glanced over its contents, lingering longest over a little note—the only note she had received from her betrayer, her to-be husband, Charles Singerly. Replacing the box, she resumed her walks to and fro. The clock struck one ; the clock struck two. Her restless fever passed. By an effort she calmed herself, undressed, knelt down, prayed long and fervently, and then retired to her couch.

The last two things she did before she went to sleep were somewhat strange ; but they had each a meaning, and our readers will comprehend it. She put her hand in the bosom of her night-dress, and drawing from thence the handkerchief which Charles had given her, and which ever since had been worn next to her heart, a memorial alike of love and sorrow, *she tore it to pieces.* And then she kissed the ring upon her finger, Charles' ring, which she had taken—her "*wedding-ring.*"

There was no longer need for the token of love and shame ; it was replaced by the symbol of love and honor.

And then, Hetty Thorpe feel asleep.

* * * * * * * *

The next morning, Julia arose feeling that her life was now, indeed, changed, since the change in her relations to her lover.

Charles arose from his couch of restlessness, conscious of but one fact on earth—that he was separated from Julia.

The sun arose beautifully and brightly. There was not a cloud to be seen upon the face of the sky.

But, strange to say, Hetty Thorpe did not rise at all.

Not seeing her, or even hearing her moving about in her room, thinking that she was still asleep, but wondering that she slept so long, the old woman who owned the house knocked at the door of Hetty's apartment. There was no answer. The woman opened the door and entered the bedroom. Hetty Thorpe was in bed, slumbering soundly apparently. The old woman advanced towards the couch with the intention of arousing her lodger, when, suddenly, she started, shuddered, almost shrieked. What saw she in that little, humble, neat bed that she should gaze with such an awful stare upon it? Ah! reader, she saw what you and I have seen, or must see some day—Death! Hetty Thorpe was dead!

The incurable sickness of which she had spoken to her visitors yesterday had done its work before its expected time. It was well that she had read her letters and looked over her pictures and handiwork last night, for she will never have a chance to read or to look again. She lies upon that bed motionless, but beautiful, more lovely dead than she ever has been alive. Blondes always look beautiful in death. Somehow we have ever cherished a fancy that all the angels are blondes.

Hetty's hands are clasped. The ring which she had taken from Charles yesterday sparkles upon her finger in the morning light, and on the floor near the bed are the pieces of the torn handkerchief.

Well, she is better where she is. She needs no marriage ceremony now; her repented sin is pardoned, and she dwells with the angels; and in heaven they neither marry, nor are given in marriage. She died pure in the sight of God. She needs no Husband; she has found a Father. Oh! it is better as it is! * * * * * *

At the appointed time Charles and Julia prepared to call upon Hetty Thorpe. But when they reached the door of her humble home they found there suspended that horrible symbol of mourning, the long black crape. The windows were closed; death was in the house They looked at each other, and the same thought occurred to them both. Hetty Thorpe, the woman they had come to see, the woman who had divided them, the woman who had told them that she soon must die, was dead. Yes, it must be so. They entered the house and found that their instinctive surmise was correct.

They were shown into Hetty's little bed-room, and there upon the bed was Hetty. Their emotions as they stood beside the body defy description. Could the sacrifice of their own lives have restored the corpse to existence they would have gladly died. They thought not *then* that the great obstacle to their own happiness was removed. No selfish musings intruded upon their minds at this awful hour. They remembered how generous and loving the dead woman had been to them; and as they could not restore her to earth they prayed for the repose of her soul in heaven.

And as Charles Singerly kissed the cold lips of the woman who had so loved him and whom he had so wronged, he fervently, in the depths of his soul, implored the pardon of the Almighty upon his youthful error. He had no fears for the departed; she had expiated her yielding fault; she had died in the sight of heaven a pure woman, and his wife; but he prayed for himself. Bitterly, by Hetty Thorpe's bedside did Charles Singerly reproach himself for the sorrow he had brought upon the dead girl. Clearly did he see, in the cold light of the grave, the full extent of his young hot sin. Oh! if libertines could but think, in their hour of desire, on the hour of DEATH, there would be but few victims.

Charles Singerly fell upon his knees at the side of the corpse; he took Hetty's cold, beautiful hand and kissed the simple, gold ring which the wearer had yesterday taken from his own finger. And then he attempted to take

it off and replace it again on his own hand as a keepsake; but Julia prevented him by a gesture. "She would rather that she should be buried with it," said Julia; and she was right; her womanly instinct was true. Hetty Thorpe, could she have spoken, would, indeed, have protested against the taking off of "her wedding ring," even though it *was* to be worn as a memorial.

Then knelt down at Charles' side, Julia, by the corpse; and in that little darkened room there was silence, death and prayer. After a space our heroine arose, kissed the dead girl upon her forehead, whispered, "My sister, who art in heaven;" and, accompanied by Charles, left the apartment.

* * * * * * * *

A few miles from New York there is an old-fashioned church, with an old-fashioned parsonage, and an old-fashioned grave yard. The section of country which surrounds it is charming, so calm, so fertile, so still. And in the old graveyard of the old church Hetty Thorpe was buried. Her remains were interred in the presence of Charles Singerly and Julia Witherson as chief mourners. Poor Hetty sleeps peacefully there. In summer time she has the pure red roses, and in winter time she has the pure white snow. And her memory is ever kept green in the hearts of two. Need we name them? They often visit her grave. Does she know it? We believe she does.

CHAPTER VIII.

A SMALL INSTALMENT OF RETRIBUTION.

Hetty Thorpe is dead and buried. Let us return to the living; and first, let us follow Charles Singerly's example, and visit Henry Hericot, Esq.

Charles and Hericot were still intimate, for, though Singerly had felt "hurt" at the comparative coldness of the latter in the season of his sickness and poverty, yet where he loved he was of a forgiving nature, and Hericot had, long ere this, taken an opportunity to "explain matters" in his usual plausible manner. So the pair were still on friendly terms.

And to-day Charles was more than usually kind. Hericot wished some pecuniary favor from him (for about the six hundredth time), and for the six hundredth time our hero (who was now, by Julia's wish, in fact her commands, the sole controller of her vast property) granted his request, and "accommodated him with a loan." Hericot thanked him profusely, but Charles stopped his thanksgivings.

"You know, Harry," he said, "that you and I are not mere friends. We have been, we are brothers. Do you not remember our college days, and our college vows?"

Here the speaker paused. Alas! he remembered, as he spoke, something more than college vows and college days. He remembered that Henry Hericot was the man who had encouraged his liaison with poor, dead Hetty Thorpe, and the man who had prevented him from doing her justice. For a moment he ceased in his inmost soul to regard Hericot with friendship; but he also remembered that according to the usual code of young men, Hericot had but acted in this

matter justifiably, and had really meant to do him a service, so the angry thought passed away.

A pleasant conversation ensued, and was continued for a considerable space of time. Hericot was anxious to know when his friend was to be married to Julia Witherson, etc, etc., and Singerly satisfied his curiosity, which is more than we intend doing for our reader on this point at present.

At about three o'clock Charles bade good bye to his friend and proceeded to keep an appointment with his lawyer, who was engaged in settling up "the old accounts" which had remained unsettled in consequence of the defalcation of Charles' agent. During his interview with the lawyer Charles made a singularly unpleasant discovery; which, had he not been the most careless of men in money matters, he would have made long ago. He found, his lawyer convinced him by ocular demonstration, that his checks upon the bank where he had been, until recently, for many years in the habit of keeping his account, had been forged; forged so skilfully that it was difficult to recognize the imitation checks from the genuine ones. But there was in the former a peculiar way of writing the letter "s," both in the words "Charles" and "Singerly," which, on close examination, served to distinguish them from the latter.

Yes, there was no doubt. The appearance of the checks themselves, and the circumstantial evidence connected with them, accumulated by the lawyer, convinced Singerly that he had been, for many months previous to the exodus of his agent, the prey of a sharper.

His suspicion was at once directed to this agent; but, strange to say, the lawyer insisted that the agent could have had nothing to do with these forgeries. He also gave Charles his reasons for this singular opinion, which, though we need not detail them here, were satisfactory to our hero.

The question then arose—If not the agent, *who* was the forger? This question was more easily asked than answered. At any rate the checks *were* frauds. They were numerous,

extending over a considerable period of time ; and though their amount was large in the aggregate, yet each of them was drawn for a comparatively small sum, in no case over two hundred dollars ; so that the careless Charles had never detected any discrepancies in his accounts. Thus, the criminal, whoever he was, had managed for months to deceive both bank and principals.

It was too late, Charles thought, to discover the perpetrator of these knaveries, but his lawyer differed from him on this point. "Do people generally know at what bank you keep your present account?" asked the lawyer.

"People do not generally know that I keep a bank account at all now," was the reply.

"Is any one aware of your pecuniary position at this time, and of your general business habits? Have you, in short, any person whom you trust wholly and unreservedly in your money matters?"

"I am my own agent now. My old college chum and fast friend, Hericot, is the only one who has my pecuniary confidence. To *him*, of course, I have no secrets."

"The forger, whoever he is," remarked the lawyer, "must have a wonderful skill in imitating hand-writings."

Suddenly the thought flashed across Charles' mind that Hericot was remarkable among his "set" for the possession of just this very faculty. But this thought merely "flashed," it remained not; it was dismissed from Charles' mind the moment it originated with indignation.

After some converse (during which it was determined to investigate further, and to set a trap for the criminal, during which Charles also made a resolve hereafter to be careful instead of careless in business matters, a vow which he faithfully kept), our hero departed from his lawyer's. Musing on these singular, recently-discovered frauds, he took it in his head to call on his friend Hericot to talk the matter over with him.

Hericot had "rooms" upon a fashionable street ; and as

Mr. Singerly was well acquainted with his locale he did not pause at the front door of his house to ring, neither at the door of the apartment to knock. It was his general polite custom to do the latter, but providentially on this occasion he forgot his habit, and entered the room without announcement.

The apartment was well-furnished, bearing all the marks of being the "bachelor den" of "a man about town." At the present moment the furniture was all in confusion, everything betokened a debauch the night previous. Surrounded by decanters, glasses, boxes of cigars, corkscrews, etc., Hericot sat by a table, his back turned to the door by which Charles entered, busily engaged in writing.

So intent was he upon his occupation that he was not aware of the presence of a stranger until a hand was suddenly laid upon his shoulder and another hand endeavored to possess itself of the MSS. upon which his present energies were centered.

Certainly Henry Hericot, Esq, must be very nervous this morning, or the papers on which he has been engaged must contain some fearful secret, for, not recognizing in the intruder upon his privacy his friend Singerly, he quivers at the touch of the strange hand like an arrested criminal, and attempts to hide the papers.

"Why, Hericot, my boy," says the manly, hearty voice of his friend, "what on earth is the matter with you? one would think you took me for a police officer, come to arrest you as a counterfeiter. You surely are not——"

Here the speaker pauses; his face changes color; his eyes flash. What does Charles Singerly see? Ah! he sees too much, more than his companion would have had him behold for worlds.

The papers on which Hericot has been engaged are not *all* concealed—one of them meets Charles' quick glance. It is a small, long, rather narrow strip, with some printed devices, letters and blanks upon it. In short it is a "bank

check." Now, there is nothing very strange in this. But, then, it is a check upon the very bank in which Charles Singerly keeps his account Well, this is a mere coincidence. Aye, but it is more, much more.

The check is "drawn" for the amount of two hundred dollars, and is in the handwriting of (not Henry Hericot, or any one else but) Charles Singerly himself. At least, so Charles himself is at first tempted to believe. But no, though his signature is attached to the check it is *not* in his handwriting. The letters "s" in his name are written in a slightly peculiar manner, which is the very way in which the letters "s" are formed in the forged checks, concerning which his lawyer had just been speaking.

Singerly takes up the check from the table, Hericot in vain endeavoring to prevent him, and compares it with a forged one handed him by his lawyer, and which he had retained. The handwriting in the two checks, the manner of forming the letters "s," is precisely similar in both; and, remarkable coincidence, they are both drawn for the same amount, two hundred dollars, so that it would be difficult to tell the two checks apart were it not for the difference in date, and their being on different banks. But both of them were drawn by the same hand in imitation of the same handwriting; and they both were forgeries.

Charles Singerly stands for a moment amazed; then the thought once more flashes like lightning across his mind that Hericot has always been noted among his friends for his dexterity in imitating handwritings. He was thus a man who *could* forge it if he would. He knew all his (Singerly's) business habits too, and had long enjoyed all facilities for defrauding him, if so disposed. This very forged check which he had just taken from Hericot's table was drawn upon a bank in which few but Hericot knew that Singerly kept any account. It was drawn, too, in a peculiar form of words, which he (Singerly) had recently adopted since his becoming the custodian of Julia Witherson's property, and which was

known to very few. Can it be that his friend, his intimate his trusted companion is a ——! "Oh, no!" says Charles to himself, in the depths of his noble soul, recovering from his first momentary shock. "I cannot doubt my friend."

But he glances at Hericot. And one look forces him to feel that his friend *has* deceived him.

Our hero's reflections, which we have taken some time to describe, consumed, in reality, but a moment. Still that period was sufficient to develope the real cowardice and meanness of Hericot's nature. As Charles gazed at him, never was a more life-like picture of guilt painted than his face. He looks like a whipped hound; like a detected criminal; and sadly, stunningly, but irresistibly, the conviction forces itself upon Singerly's mind that the man he has for many years loved and trusted as a brother, spite of palpable faults, has been unworthy; has been a forger and a thief—robbing the very man who literally had fed him.

In that parlor, with its disarranged furniture; by that table, with its decanters, glasses, boxes of cigars, and meerschaum pipes, stands our hero, with his handsome, classical face, varying, like his soul, with the mingled emotions of sorrow and of anger—while Hericot crouches on a seat near him, pale and trembling.

Charles holds in his hand the two forged checks and points to them indignantly, while Hericot clutches the remainder, upon which he has been "practising," endeavoring mechanically but uselessly to conceal them, while he inwardly curses his "damned folly," in leaving his room door open, so that Singerly could enter.

But the shrewdest rogues often commit some piece of 'damned folly." It is a wise dispensation of heaven.

At last Hericot finds words. "Do not expose me publicly!' he gasps.

He is so frightened that he dares not lie. His own words, his selfish prayer for personal safety, gives to Charles the only additional proof needed of the speaker's guilt.

"Expose you!" cries Singerly. "I am no thief-taker—even though you be a thief. Still it *would* make a sensation in fashionable circles, were it to be announced that the handsome, dashing Henry Hericot was a forger, and robbed his friends!"

The last words are spoken bitterly. Charles' wounded feelings find vent awhile in sarcasm. He continued, looking at Hericot:

"You would appear to advantage in the criminal's dock. Your lady mistresses would flock in crowds to see you in your new rôle. Your fellows, who caroused with you in this very room last night, would come and gaze at you curiously, and say, each to the other, 'Well, I always wondered where Hericot got all the money from to give his "late suppers" with!' And then you would look so handsome, and, of course, so smiling. And your name would be so conspicuous in the 'Court Reports,' and your likeness would be so accurately given in the Police Gazette. And all this would help you so much in your worldly career, it would aid you so materially in obtaining your 'rich wife,' and your 'fashionable establishment.' Oh, I must 'expose you publicly,' as you call it, after all. Such an opportunity for a sensation must not be lost. Oh, certainly, I must expose you!"

Hericot raised his head and looked at Singerly, as if in doubt whether or no the latter intended to execute his threat. But his companion's face gave no sign of jesting, unless it were of the most bitter sort. Then, for a moment, the idea suggested itself to Hericot of escape, of resistance, of obtaining from Singerly, by force, the proof of his guilt that he held—the forged checks.

Suddenly tearing, by a quick movement, the pieces of paper that he still held in his own hand, Hericot made a rush upon his unwelcome visitor. He was a coward, but even a coward will fight when brought to bay. But Singerly was too strong for him, and seizing him with a firm grasp, prevented his design. Then Henry Hericot, Esq., lost his courage again, became once more an abject coward, and begged for mercy

"Oh! for God's sake be a man, even if you are a villain!" cries Singerly, in disgust. "Let me not find that the person who has been my intimate for so many years, is a craven as well as a forger. Get up from your knees. If you never kneel to heaven don't kneel to me. Get up, I say.

"Why, what a fool you have been," continues Singerly; "what a consummate fool, to risk your soul, or what you regard more, all your worldly chances by forging upon a man from whom you could borrow, at any moment, all the money you wanted; from whom, in fact, you *have* received large sums, whose purse has been for years yours!" The memory of the favors he had showered upon Hericot, and the base requital he had met with, seems to stir Charles' anger, as is most natural. In truth it is most strange that he has not grown indignant long before this.

"You base wretch," he cries, his eyes flashing; "you heartless ingrate, you most accomplished deceiver, you"—— but he checks himself, pauses, grows calmer, colder, more bitter, then proceeds:

"You fool, you have killed your goose, that laid your golden eggs! For the sake of the guilty chance of a few hundred dollars, you have forever prevented yourself from obtaining, freely and fairly, from me, as many thousands. You have placed your position, your liberty, yourself, in the power of a man who is no longer your friend nor your dupe. Idiot, did you not know that sin is folly, and that every sinner is a fool?"

Hericot writhes under these words, and mutters something inaudible. He looks, and, we dare say, feels, unutterably mean.

Singerly glances at him in his abjectness a moment, and suddenly his mood changes.

"And to think," he cries, "how I have loved that man! Oh, Henry!" he exclaims, his voice becoming lower, more tender even, "oh, Henry! I once looked upon you as my brother. Your very faults were almost sacred in my eyes. We were children together, school-boys together—college-mates, class-mates,

life-mates. I have had no secrets from you, pecuniary or personal. I have been ever your true friend, your brother of the heart. I have been warned against you, but I indignantly repelled what I deemed to be slanders, and have trusted you all the more. My purse has been yours, my time yours, my influence yours, my home yours, my heart yours. What more could you have had? You were knit to my soul, as David to Jonathan, as Pythias to Damon. I had no schemes, no plans for life, in which you did not bear a part. And now—and now——"

His voice falters, and tears, aye, tears, force their way into his manly eyes. We say "manly," for Charles Singerly was never more of a man than at this moment, when he weeps over a forever-lost friend; a friend lost forever by worse than death—by deceit.

Hericot notices the change in Singerly's demeanor, and the idea rushes across his mind to take advantage of this "melting mood." He is a man wonderfully fertile in resources, and utterly unscrupulous. He sees that he cannot deny his guilt, but that by trumping up a tale of romance and sorrow as a motive for his crime, he may yet escape from the dilemma in which he is involved. So he "plays his cards" at once.

"Oh, Charles!" he cries, "I am not so guilty as you think me."

The fellow's handsome face absolutely began to assume a look of "indignant virtue."

Singerly listened, amazed; but yet, in his inmost soul, delighted: that the man he had loved might prove to be not such a wretch after all. His pleasure at this prospect can be appreciated by every noble heart.

Hericot began humbly:

"Charles, I can offer some slight extenuation for my sin. The forged checks were not for my own use; I drew them to comply with the urgent demands of a man who had me in his power. He came to me, demanding money; I had none to give him; you were absent from the city; in desperation, I used your name to obtain funds, which I well knew you would grant me had you

been within my reach. I meant to replace the sums in a short time. I intended to tell you of my bold attempts; but I was disappointed in my first design, and lacked the moral courage to fulfil my second. But, still, I have been inexcusably criminal. I offer no apology. I have no adequate one to give. But I can, at least, repay, pecuniarily, your losses. I have received lately a few thousand dollars. I give it all to you. It is nothing. I can never atone my fault. I deserve exposure. But, most of all, do I deserve punishment for my violation of the sacred obligations of our friendship, our life-long brotherhood. I repent, I have long repented, though I, but this very hour, under the pressure of that cursed man, was about to sin again. Do with me as you will. You take all of life worth having from me when you withdraw your friendship."

His humility of tone (though it was merely assumed), his repentance (though it was a mockery), his excuses (though they were all inventions), his offers of recompense (though they were worth nothing), his allusions to their friendship (though not one of them was heartfelt), all of these had an effect upon the generous soul of his companion. Oh! Hericot was, indeed, a most consummate and accomplished liar!

And then he was such a capital actor! His eye expressed such apparently genuine emotions; his handsome face seemed so truly penitential; his attitude was so resigned; and his words so despairing, that, as Charles Singerly gazed and listened, the memory of "old times" came over his spirit; and he would, then and there, have freely forgiven his companion, had not a peculiar incident now occurred.

As Singerly was on the point of offering his hand to the pseudo-repentant Hericot, in token of his pardon, his glance, chancing to wander momentarily, happened to fall upon a diamond cross, which was lying carelessly exposed in an open casket, on a small table in a corner of the apartment. It was of remarkable workmanship; and, at once, like the lightning-flash, the memory of the diamond cross of which Julia Witherson had spoken to him years ago as having been retained by her betrayer, rushed

across his mind. Singerly remembered well her description of the cross, and this one before him tallied exactly with it. Probably it was the same ; and, probably, Henry Hericot was the betrayer of Julia Witherson.

In an instant, various circumstances in connection with these parties, which had hitherto been comparatively unnoticed, now assumed a new and damning significance to the mental vision of Charles Singerly. The distaste, concealed yet sufficiently evident, which each party had evinced for the other ; particular occasions of mutual embarrassment ; a striking coincidence in the dates of certain events in the history of both, such as their mutual residence in Paris ; all these were little links in the chain of evidence. Still, there was room for doubt.

Singerly's brain was on fire. He determined to be satisfied at once.

So he advanced suddenly to the little table in the corner, seized the diamond cross, and held it before the astonished gaze of his companion.

"Answer me truly," he cried : "Did not this cross belong to Miss Witherson ? Is it not the cross which her dead mother gave her, and which she, in a moment of infatuation, gave to you, and which you have basely retained, against her wishes, merely on account of its possible pecuniary value ? Are you not the betrayer, the seducer, (how he hissed these words !) of Julia Witherson ? Answer me truly, by the living God ! or living devil ! !"

Taken by surprise ; cursing the luck which had allowed him carelessly to expose this token, which for years he had kept carefully concealed ; astonished beyond measure that Charles was aware of the former seduction of the woman to whom he was, at that very moment, betrothed ; ignorant of how much Julia had told Charles ; fearful of the vehemence of his manner and of the wild light in his eye ; confused, startled, Hericot denied not the charge brought against him. He looked and felt the very picture, as well as reality, of conscious guilt.

Still he said nothing—he confessed not ; there might yet

be some mistake. Charles would be further satisfied. He looked at the cross which he held; it was a very peculiar one; it answered precisely to the description given. Besides, he had just found Hericot guilty of one crime, and it was most likely that he was not innocent of another; and he had always been unscrupulous with women. More than all, some subtle instinct told Singerly that Providence was now unraveling at once all the mysteries of his companion's sins.

"Answer me," cried our hero,—"I *will* know: Are you the man who, years ago, betrayed *her* ?"

Hericot, completely cowed, stammered out a reply, which was in the affirmative—if in anything.

Like a tiger upon his prey, Singerly rushed upon his former friend. Hericot was a powerful man, but his physical strength was naught now, opposed to the frenzied force of the indignant Charles.

In the madness of the moment, if Singerly had possessed a knife, pistol, or other deadly weapon, there would have been murder done. Never was a man more enraged than he, nor more justly.

He caught Hericot by the throat, and threw him struggling upon the floor, and would have strangled him.

A thousand mingled stormy emotions gave Singerly the power of a giant: the love and kindness he had shown for years so betrayed, so abused; the robberies perpetrated by this trusted rascal; the lies just told to him in this very apartment (for Charles' instinct now told him that all Hericot's recent pathetic apology was an audacious falsehood); the thoughts of all these nerved his arm. But, chiefly, the wrongs of Julia inspired his vengeance.

He thought of *her* abused trust; her despised love; her mocked at tears and prayers; her desertion; her agonies of shame and remorse; the sorrow and the long bitterness he himself had experienced upon her account; and the memory of all this sent a thrill of fire through his every vein, and almost maddened him.

Singerly was by nature a most passionate man, and now his temper, long repressed, burst forth. Hericot, in mortal fear, gave himself up for dead. The grasp of his once friend tightened round his throat, and, as he struggled, the table upon which he had been writing, fell upon him with all its weight of decanters, and still further crushed him.

But Charles' wrathful mood was as brief as it was violent. He recollected himself, by a mighty effort of will took off his hand from the throat of his companion, and arose. Hericot was too exhausted and too cowed to follow his example, and still lay panting on the floor.

"Arise," cried Singerly,—"arise, traitor, liar, thief, libertine, coward!"

As he spoke, he touched the prostrate form of the man he addressed with his foot, mockingly and loathingly, as he would have kicked a piece of carrion.

"Arise," cried Singerly again; and Hericot rose slowly, sorely, meanly, like a whipped hound.

"To think," exclaimed Charles bitterly, "that such a creature should have such a woman in his power—that such a reptile should be a cause of shame to my ——"

Even as he spoke, a diabolical smile of malignant glee, mingled with the cowed expression of Hericot's face, which had Singerly perceived, he would, undoubtedly, have killed him on the spot. But Charles saw it not; and suddenly his face was transfigured; it grew bright with a sudden glorious thought.

"She shall *not* be in his power," he cried, "but he in hers; he shall not triumph over her, but *she* o'er him; he shall no longer be to her a cause of shame, but of glory. Yes, yes, it shall be so; it will be at once a reward and a retribution."

Then turning to the astounded Hericot he said, "Take your hat and come with me."

"Where?" Hericot found courage to ask.

"To Miss Witherson," was the reply.

"And what to do?" asked Hericot.

"No matter what, whatever I command you," said Singerly sternly. "Make ready; follow me; and bear in mind that if you attempt to leave me, or to refuse to comply with my desires, I hand you over at once to the civil authorities as a forger."

Cursing heaven, earth, hell, his conqueror and himself, Henry Hericot proceeded to attire himself hastily for the street, wondering greatly. Singerly spoke not another word; and when his companion, who had not yet recovered from the effects of the struggle and attempted strangulation, had at last completed his street toilet, the two "friends," now enemies, departed together, Charles keeping a watchful eye upon his follower.

And thus, endeavoring to conceal their intense inward agitation; with hearts full of hatred, though their faces were smiling as they returned the salutations of their acquaintances; the one with his soul full of a strange and glorious purpose, the other's spirit possessed by the devils of fear and shame; the two men passed on through the crowded streets, in the pleasant sunshine.

CHAPTER IX.

AN INSTALLMENT OF TRIUMPH.

JULIA WITHERSON sat by the window, awaiting the arrival of her lover. It was past the time he had promised to call, but she was not *too* impatient. And as the beautiful afternoon wore on towards twilight, she sat thinking. Her meditations were both sad and sweet; but they terminated in grateful praise to heaven. And as she thought upon Charles she blessed him.

A ring is heard at the door-bell of her uncle's (or rather her own) magnificent residence. It is *his* (her lover's) ring. She rises and crosses the splendidly furnished room, and meets her lover at the door. She kisses him fondly; but he scarcely returns her kiss; he is strangely agitated; his face is flushed, yet partly frowning; and he is not alone; Henry Hericot is with him; and *he*, too, looks strangely pale and excited. What can this all mean?

"Ah, Charles," she murmurs in his ear, "I did not expect any one, save you. And why have you brought *him*? Oh! I cannot endure him."

"I know it," is her lover's reply; "and I also know your *reason*."

"My reason," repeats Julia, annoyed.

"Yes," cried her lover, "I know why you hate and despise, and have a right to despise and hate that man, Henry Hericot, Esq., as *he* calls himself; fool, forger, liar and libertine as *I* call him."

"Why, Charles, what do you mean?" asks she.

"I mean, Julia, that I know all; that Henry Hericot, years ago, was the cause of your—I cannot utter the word,

but you will understand me. In brief, this man before us was the man who deceived you in Paris, and darkened, by his cursed arts, the light of your young life. You comprehend me ?"

"But too well, Charles." Her lover did, indeed, know all. The only secret connected with her past was now revealed to him. What was he about to do ?

" How I discovered all this I will not tell you now : suffice it to say I know him to be a seducer and a swindler. You wonder why I have polluted your dwelling with the presence of this man. I will explain. I have brought him here for two reasons : first, to show you that I have found him out, that I am no longer either his friend or his dupe ; second, in order that you may know him for yourself."

" Alas !" cried Julia, sadly and truly, " I know him but too well."

She gazes at Hericot. And as she looks, memory recalls the scenes which have transpired between her and this man. She shudders, yet she almost pities.

And Hericot gazes at Julia. And she is so handsome, so superbly glorious, this afternoon, that he curses his folly in abandoning such a beautiful creature. In all his perplexities, he is still the same gross sensualist. But she is now beyond his reach forever !

Charles Singerly continues thus : " Julia, the man whom you was once mad enough to love, and to dream that he loved you, is a common thief, a detected forger ! Yes, the handsome, accomplished, fashionable, successful Henry Hericot, Esq., is a criminal of the meanest kind—one who has robbed his friend. See, here are the checks forged in my name by him. I wish you, Julia, to take particular notice of them. Why, that fellow is too despicable to be called a man. I will tell you how I discovered his secret and yours ; through his very meanness ; by the very *diamond cross* he refused to return to you, because it was pecuniarily valuable. See, here it is."

" Oh, my diamond cross—my dear, dead mother's diamond

cross!" cries Julia, joyfully, as she receives the relic from the hands of her lover. "Now I feel indeed forgiven. Charles, now I can fancy that my mother looks down upon me from heaven and smiles. It is the lost relic of my early sin. The relic is restored and the sin is pardoned."

She lifts her new-found treasure to her lips, and raises her beautiful eyes upwards, and Charles kisses her.

Henry Hericot smiles contemptuously at the kissing of the cross, but is stirred with unpleasant emotions of jealousy at the kissing of the lovers. But he says nothing; during all the abuse heaped by Charles upon him he has had naught to say, he is dumb, either through shame, fear, or policy.

Charles resumes thus:

"And now, Julia, your would-be destroyer is in *your* power. The tables are turned upon him, and retribution has overtaken him. He has thought, doubtless, that you are at his mercy; that he can cause you shame and triumph over you. But he has made a mistake; he has reckoned without Providence. You are his superior now—you hold the winning cards. We can disgrace him at any moment; we can hand him over when we please as a criminal; he is at our mercy—at your mercy. Fool, you have lost a woman who is beautiful; and you worship beauty. Fool, you have lost a woman who is rich; and your god is money. Fool, you have lost a true friend, the only friend you ever had. Fool, you have not even succeeded in disgracing the woman whom you deceived and abandoned. She has *through you* become pure—and my wife. Fool, villain, coward, we have triumphed over you in every earthly way, and we leave the rest to heaven."

While Singerly thus addresses him, Hericot writhes, as well he may. For it is all true, what is said. He has indeed been a fool, as well as knave. Virtue would have served his turn in the end better than vice; but it is now too late. And he writhes in impotent anguish.

But, if he is in their power, are not they also in his? If they can, at will, proclaim him a forger, can he not, at will, proclaim

to the world Julia's shame? And rather than he should do this, would not they gladly hold their peace in regard to his misdemeanors? Yes, yes. All is not yet lost; he, too, holds a trump card; and he smiles.

But Singerly continues addressing him: "Go. Rid us of your presence forever. But, ere you depart, there is one thing yet to be done. Down on your knees and beg this woman's pardon; down on your knees, I say."

Julia started. The command, though just, was so strange. Hericot also started. This last proposed humiliation was too much. Kneel to a woman, and to her, of all women! Liar and coward, as he was, this was more than he could endure. He answered, "Never!"

"Do you refuse to kneel?" asked Singerly.

"I do—you are mad!" was the reply.

"Then," said Charles, "I will, as I have threatened, *expose* you; you have had a surfeit of *vice;* you shall increase your repertoire of experiences by a practical knowledge of *shame.*"

Charles' eye flashed. He looked and felt, fiery and indignant.

Hericot was now thoroughly frightened as well as astonished. His heart told him that Singerly would keep his word; that his friend, now his enemy, would, indeed, expose him unless he complied with his request, strange and debasing as it might be. He was on the point of yielding, but first he would, coward though he was, make one last effort at resistance.

So he muttered aloud something which, in a vague, rambling way, hinted at the knowledge he possessed of Julia Witherson's dishonor, and of the hold that this knowledge gave him upon Charles Singerly. If Singerly exposed him (Hericot) he, Hericot, would, through the woman he loved, expose him (Singerly).

But he did not proceed far with this base threat. Ere he had half stated his hint, Charles understood it, and approached him, his face dark with passion. He was indeed *dangerous* now,; yet he was not violent; he merely grasped Hericot by the arm and

hissed, "Another word, and by the living God I'll beat you to death." He would have kept his oath.

Julia Witherson looked on. She had understood Hericot's threat, and, Christian as she was, she would not, we believe, have interfered had her lover struck her seducer dead at her feet. She was a WOMAN as well as a Christian.

Hericot ceases hint or threat, and is pale and speechless.

"Will you kneel and ask her pardon?" asked Singerly.

"I will—will render her an—an apology," stammered Hericot.

"Upon your knees," added Charles.

"Why do you wish me to—to—kneel?" asked Hericot.

"That your humiliation may be thorough. You would have relentlessly disgraced her; I shall as relentlessly disgrace you. A man is as deserving of shame as a woman; aye, double her portion of shame is due him, as he is double the offender. So fall down on your knees before the woman you would have caused to fall down into perdition. I am a poet, and I like poetic justice. I will give you three minutes. If not on your knees in that period you shall be in the Tombs within three hours."

So saying, Singerly took out his watch, and held it in his hand.

One minute passed in perfect silence. The last rays of the setting sun stole through the windows. Julia gazed at her lover and her betrayer alternately. Singerly gazed at his watch intently, and Henry Hericot gazed around him wildly.

Another minute passed as the previous one. The second minute expired. "You have but 60 seconds left to decide whether to kneel for a moment or to be ruined for a life. Come, Julia, stand beside me, my arm around you. Now, Sirrah, kneel to us both."

Thus cried Charles; and as he was about to shut his watch at the expiration of the third minute, Hericot, with his fearful mental struggle daguerreotyped upon his face, suddenly fell upon his knees before the lovers.

His cup of humiliation was drained to the very dregs.

And Charles and Julia smiled proudly.

* * * * * *

Henry Hericot is gone. He departs with a curse.

Charles Singerly, too, is gone. But he depart with a kiss

CHAPTER X.

TWO FEMALE FRIENDS.

After the departure of her present lover and her former betrayer, Julia still remained seated in her magnificent parlor, musing over the scene she had just witnessed. Her sensations were those of pride. She had won the victory over her once victor; she was dignified in her own eyes, and in his who had years ago striven to degrade her utterly. Her frame expanded, her eye kindled, her soul was glorified.

But soon pride gave place to pity for his humiliation, even though he had so injured her. And she not only pitied, but prayed in her soul for him; as she sat watching the streets and the twilight.

But suddenly she sees a female form ascend the steps of her dwelling; a ring is heard at the door, and is answered by the servant, and Miss Kate Somers enters.

A desultory conversation takes place between "the friends" on the various topics of the day. But Miss Somers is evidently ill at ease; she has "something on her mind," and she glances occasionally towards her companion with looks the reverse of friendly. She is "itching" for a quarrel, and at last she seizes her opportunity, and commences one.

We need not remind our readers that Miss Somers, though nominally and professedly (on her part) "the intimate" of Miss Witherson; though having enjoyed Miss W.'s favors, pecuniary and otherwise, for many years; is yet, at heart, her enemy. And now she throws off the mask of friendship, and, actuated by jealousy, rivalry, envy, malice, and many other like evil passions, attacks Julia with bitterness.

She feels, on this occasion, particularly hostile to Miss

Witherson, from some gossip she has heard, concerning some plans of hers with which our heroine has recently felt it her duty to interfere, and so to-day her dislike has culminated, and she has determined, come what may, to indulge in that peculiarly feminine luxury, which is vulgarly called, "venting one's spite."

And she vents it. She is restrained by no gratitude, friendship, delicacy, or even the dictates of ordinary politeness. It is a melancholy fact that "ladies" *will*, occasionally, "forget themselves" (to phrase it mildly); and when this does happen they are ten times more desperate and less scrupulous than men. And so regardless of "the situation," and of "etiquette," Miss Katherine Somers gives way to her spleen.

Of course, during the last few years various stray hints or morceaux of gossip, more or less correct, have transpired concerning Miss Witherson's career (though nothing definite or dangerous); and of such of these as suit her purpose Miss Somers avails herself, exaggerating them when necessary. She speaks of Julia's formerly somewhat lax code of religion, her ditto code of morals, her gay Parisian life. She then alludes to her present "bigotry" and "Puritanical stiffnacedness;" to her pecuniary "extravagance" and "pride;" to her strange "Utopian plans of reform;" and last but not least, to what Miss Somers designates as Miss Witherson's "flirtations" and "social interferences." This last is peculiarly inspired by a reminiscence of Julia's success in a quarter where she herself had failed, i. e. Charles Singerly.

Julia Witherson listens to her "friend," but she is not surprised; she is prepared for just such an interview as this, and so at last she speaks:

"I see you wish to quarrel. Politeness would suggest that you should not have called upon me at my own house to do so; but no matter, I have long known your true character, and at what price to value your 'friendship.' As you have now given me the opportunity I am determined to end all connection between us."

"Indeed," rejoins Miss Somers, "indeed."

Julia has so often passed by her uncivil conduct unnoticed that Miss Somers has forgotten that there *is* such a thing as "going too far;" but now she suddenly remembers that after all she can hardly afford to quarrel with Julia. But there is no receding.

"Yes," continues Miss Witherson, "I am desirous of ending the farce of our intimacy. Sometimes friendship proves a 'tragedy;' in our place it has long been a broad 'comedy;' and it has now reached its last act."

"As you please," says Miss Somers, bold in tongue, but rather blank at heart.

"I owe you no explanation as to my early life," continued Miss Witherson. "I have made mistakes; so have we all. I regret mine, have repented, and have got rid of them. I have been 'gay' and 'worldly'—I am so no longer. My life at present is neither 'bigoted' or 'Puritanical,' but what you cannot understand, a Christian. That I am *not* 'proud' my association with *you* is proof; and if I am somewhat 'extravagant,' I, at least, am liberal. As to my 'plans of reform,' they are, *successful;* and as to my 'flirtations,' I can only answer that I do *not* flirt. The charge of 'social interference' is unfounded. I have only to ask you whether I ever 'interfered' with your cunning plans for the capture of Mr. Charles Singerly?"

This last was a home-thrust; and Miss Somers colored in high indignation. "Do you dare to accuse me," she cries, "of endeavoring to— to—" She paused.

Our heroine completed the sentence, "to ensnare Mr. Charles Singerly? I *do*."

"Then I resent the base insinuation, and I cast you off for ever."

"From what?" asked Miss Witherson, as if amazed.

"From my— from my— my friendship," was the reply.

"I never possessed it," was the simple but sufficient rejoinder of Julia.

"Then I will leave your house instantly and for ever," said Miss Somers, attempting the majestic, and rising.

"Stay a moment if you please," rejoined Miss Witherson, beckoning her visitor to resume her seat. Then with a genuine majesty of demeanor, she continued, "I have a few last words to say to you. You have objected to my religion, my morals and my life; let me show you the life, morals and religion of some of my censors. Their piety is a cloak for Sunday wear, far too fine for the rest of the week. Saints as they are, they act remarkably like sinners. They reverence God so much that they never talk of Him; seldom, if ever, think of Him. As for the 'charity' which he so blesses, they ignore it. Religion is to them merely a respectable, irksome form by which they can gain an immortality of bliss without the 'bore' of a pious 'life.' Their morality is of the surface altogether; it consists solely in negatives—in *not* saying certain words, in *not* performing certain actions, in *not* attending certain places; not, however, because these are objectionable, but because they are *unfashionable*, while words, actions and places are permitted equally vicious, *or more so*, which have attached to them the worthless sanction of a corrupt society. The world is alike, in their morals and their religion, everything; right, truth, God, and genuine purity nothing; while their life is useless, worthless, free from vulgar vice, but full of fashionable iniquity; an existence of eating, drinking, flirting, dancing, gossiping, slandering, idling, and genteel sinning. And yet they pretend to be 'censors.' Well, God will judge them some day, and by His own rules. Such are some of my critics, and the critics of such as me."

"Do you include *me* in your description?" asked Miss Somers, with that look of "indignant virtue" so peculiar to her class.

"There is a vulgar proverb," rejoined Miss Witherson,—"'if the cap fits, wear it.'"

"I do not understand your 'slang,'" replied the elegant Miss Somers, contemptuously.

"I will explain it then," said Julia. "I do include you, Miss Katherine Somers, among those I have just described. I do regard you as, alike in religion, morals and life, an emphatic hypocrite."

"You insult me," interrupted Miss Somers.

"Not as you have insulted *me*," was the calm reply; "for I speak the truth. Let me tell you one solemn fact, which *your* world may deny, but which is God's own truth, and which I have been taught by experience. There is many a man and many a woman whom society condemns and despises, who is vastly superior and infinitely purer than those whom it adores. There is many a criminal in the cell of a prison who is less guilty than the millionaire in his avenue mansion. There is many a woman who walks our streets nightly, who is more truly virtuous than the 'lady' who brushes past her, escorted in all the pomp of fashion. There is many a woman who has fallen, repented and risen, who is far more pure than she who has never technically "fallen." There is many a woman, like me, were I ten times worse than you have hinted, who is a truer and purer woman, by far, than such as you."

"Your theories are outrageous—but all the more worthy of you," replied Miss Somers, defiant still, though in heart (if she had a heart) she writhed at the *truth* of her companion's words.

"And now," said Julia, unheeding this last interruption, "you see, I know you. Let me tell you more: you have never been my friend, but my secret enemy—my rival."

"Your rival!"

"Yes; you endeavored to ensnare Charles Singerly—the man who is soon to be my husband. You attempted unworthy arts and baseless slander—but in vain. Since I have inherited my present wealth, you have 'todied' to me, though you have hated me. You see you have not deceived me. And now, go. You have sought a quarrel with me, and I have gratified you; only I have the best of the quarrel. You owe me a considerable sum of money—*keep it*. All that you have of mine, retain; but go. Henceforth we are the merest acquaintances only.

Two hours afterwards, Miss Kate Somers was in her own room, cursing inwardly the victory which Julia had just won over her, and cursing, too, her own folly, which had forever lost her a "most useful" friend.

While Julia sat in the moonlight with her lover.

CHAPTER XI.

A CLERGYMAN IN A NEW CHARACTER.

After the scene of his crowning humiliation, Henry Hericot, Esq., rushed, rather than walked, to his "rooms"; and, having gained their privacy, and assured himself *this time* that the door was locked, and he was secure from intrusion, abandoned himself to his feelings. And yet he hardly knew himself what he felt, for his brain and soul were in a whirl.

He cursed the chance, for so he deemed it, which led Singerly so unexpectedly to visit him; the chance which exposed the forged checks and the diamond cross to *his* eyes. He cursed Singerly, Julia, and his own cowardice. He cursed fortune, that had so arranged it that he had, by his own conduct, lost the very man and woman whom it was his interest to preserve for himself. He cursed the triumph which this man and this woman had obtained.

He was mad with rage; and yet his rage was futile. Was there no method by which he could restore Singerly and Julia to his uses again? None. Was there then no way to have revenge upon them? None.

And now he was at bay; abandoned by his friend, his banker —placed forever in that man's power; deeply in debt, and none to aid him; humiliated basely before a woman whom he would now give the world to possess, but whom he had lost forever by his own wilful madness. Gods! his reflections to-night certainly were not enviable! Truly, the way of the transgressor is hard!

An hour or two passed by. He took no note of time. A knock was heard at the door. He heeded it not. It was repeated. "Who's there?" he cried, without moving from the chair on which he had thrown himself. "A friend—do you not know me? Come, let me in. I have come to take you to the

theatre," replied a familiar voice. Hericot arose and opened the door ; refused, at first, to go to the theatre ; but changed his mind.

Swallowing a great quantity of brandy, he departed with his companion.

At the theatre he met several of his boon comrades. But the play pleased him not at all. There was a villain in it, and the villain thought he was very shrewd, and succeeded for a while ; but turned out to be a fool, and was detected and humiliated at last. So Hericot cursed the play, and took some more brandy, and grew more reckless, and became even noisy ; so that a number of foolish persons, who had really come to the theatre to see the play, cried "hush !"

After a while, he and his companions left the theatre and entered a fashionable gambling-house hardby. Hericot was generally lucky at hazard, as he "played a safe game," and occasionally cheated. But now, to-night, that he really needed money, fate was against him, and he was not able to cheat. So, thinking bitterly of the rich friend, the banker, he had this afternoon lost forever, he departed from the gambling-house also, having first taken another draught of brandy.

He next wended his way to a fashionable house of evil. But he failed to find peace there ; and, having taken still more brandy, he again departed.

At last, near midnight, Hericot, in a state of semi-intoxication, accompanied by two "friends," as inebriated as himself, entered a well-known restaurant. As he descended the steps on one side of the entrance, he recognized a person whom he knew entering the restaurant on the other side. He certainly was surprised at beholding this person, at such a place, at such a time. Possibly our readers will be equally astonished when we inform them that the person alluded to was none other than the Rev. George Howard !

What, we hear you exclaim, a clergyman found in a restaurant at midnight ! Yes, and found eating oysters and drinking ale, *and wherefore not ?* Has not a clergyman a right to be

hungry and to eat? Has he not the same privilege of oysters and ale that a lawyer has, or a doctor, or a clerk? If there is anything "morally wrong" in a restaurant for a priest, then the same restaurant must be morally wrong for a layman. There is no commandment for the pastor that is not also a commandment for the flock; there is no privilege lawful for the latter, that is not also allowable for the former.

There is a vast deal of cant about the "duties," and "responsibilities," and "example," and "consistency" of ministers, which is principally talked by people who have no religion themselves, who care nothing for the church or its administrators, and who are the ones who most do themselves what they would most condemn in a clergyman. Priests are but men, and all that can be lawfully done by a man can be done by a priest.

But then you exclaim, "Should not a clergyman refrain from many things not in themselves positively sinful, for the sake of *example*? Should he not pay a certain amount of respect to the religious prejudices of society, even if they be *but* prejudices?" We answer, that this is a point to be decided by each individual priest himself. It is a matter of *discretion*, not conscience. And the Rev. George Howard had, in this particular case, decided that there was nothing "out of the way" in his eating oysters and drinking ale in this restaurant. And accordingly he gratified his desires.

Hericot and his "friends," on entering the restaurant, proceeded immediately, not to the "eating-bar," where the Rev. George Howard located himself comfortably, but to the "bar" proper (or *im*proper), where drinks were dispensed. And the trio called for brandy. And they poured out for themselves largely, and drank copiously of the fiery liquor.

Hericot's companions soon lost the little sense they originally brought with them, and became maudlin and sentimental; invited all present to unite with them, "join them," as they phrased it; seized perfect strangers by their coat collars, and swore that they were d——d good fellows; staggered uneasily to and fro, under the impression that they were graceful and

dignified; used an abundance of profane language, and low, obscene slang; and performed other similar feats only attempted by those who are both "loose" and "tight."

Hericot himself was well "seasoned." He had been a "hard drinker" for many years, and it was no easy matter for him to become intoxicated. But he lost his usual self-control to-night. He became not exactly "drunk," but very far from "sober." Charles Singerly's name was casually mentioned by one of his companions, and Hericot greeted the allusion to his former friend by a coarse oath, and a coarser slander.

The Rev. George Howard stood not many steps distant. He had partaken quietly of his refreshment and was about to depart, when Hericot's voice fell upon his ear. Howard, at first, almost believed that his senses must have deceived him. He himself, personally, was no admirer of Hericot; he had always avoided him, but he knew that he was intimate with Singerly, he had seen them together but the day before, in all the abandon of friendship; he knew that Hericot was under infinite obligations to Charles. It could not therefore be possible that the latter, even if drunk, could be so strangely, meanly inconsistent as to thus publicly insult his bosom friend. But, alas! his ears did not deceive him. There stood Hericot, coupling the name of Charles Singerly with infamy!

Howard, though a clergyman, was still a *man*. Not a mere collection of theological "isms," and a puritanical machine, but a living, thinking, feeling, full-blooded man, who had the instincts, the virtues, and, perhaps, one or two of the infirmities of other men. Now, could any of our male readers stand by quietly and hear one of their dearest friends foully abused, and yet not resent the wrong? We think not. Neither could the Rev. George Howard.

So, clergyman as he was, (though few at that moment knew this fact, as Howard never wore the inevitable white cravat), he stepped up to Hericot and said to him, in a low, stern tone:

"Sir, not even your intoxication shall allow you, or any man,

to insult my friend with impunity. And, of all men on earth, you are the last from whom I should have expected this insult to come. Go home and go to bed, sir."

Hericot was almost sobered by his amazement. A clergyman, one of that race for whom he entertained the most supreme contempt, thus to "catechize" him, and in a *public bar-room!* He retorted in this wise :

"Sir, you are a priest, and had best be at your prayers. What business have you in a bar-room? You must, yourself, be drunk to be here. I shall not measure my words to suit your taste. To bed yourself, and may it do you good."

The speaker's tone was most galling. But Howard's temper was under capital control. He heeded not any provocation to himself. He smiled scornfully, and would have now withdrawn from the scene ; but Hericot, fancying that every priest was necessarily a poltroon, called after him, loudly, so as to attract the attention of all present :

"Coward—damned coward ; to attempt to raise a quarrel, and then to slink away to escape the consequences."

Perhaps it was Howard's duty as a priest to *allow* this contumely ; to walk away, satisfied that his own soul exonerated him from cowardice, and rendered him superior to insult ; to act as a Quaker, or an "orthodox" Christian. All we know is, he did *not* depart, he did not keep silence, but he acted like a man. And, entre nous, he who is a true man *must* be a true Christian.

The Rev. George Howard retraced his steps and approached Hericot. "I never 'slink' from consequences," he said firmly and proudly. "I am no braggart ; but on the other hand, I am neither a false friend, a low slanderer, or a common bully."

Hericot was astonished. Howard, the man whom he despised ; at whom he had sneered as the "model priest ;" whom he, and those like him, regarded as a creature less than human ; whom, as the intimate of Singerly, he had formerly suspected, and now hated ; this man stood before him reliantly, almost defiantly, and retorted to his sneers. He was, for a moment, overpowered. But Hericot was too inebriated to be long surprised

or prudent. He was full of "wine," and what is known as "Dutch courage." Had he been wise to-night he would have noticed the stern light in the eye of the Rev. George Howard; he would have heeded the compression of the indignant clergyman's lips; he would have taken note, too, that Howard was powerfully built, full of muscular as of intellectual strength; but he did none of these things; but he *did* what was final, fatal and irrevocable.

In his drunken fury, his conscience telling him that the words "false friend, low slanderer, and common bully," were appropriate to himself, in his intoxication and frenzy, Hericot cried, shaking his fist at the clergyman, "You are a d——d hypocrite, and only fit for the company of Charles Singerly, who is a ——." Our pen refuses to write the epithet he employed. And then he concluded with a blow—yes, the villain struck the clergyman.

Now, we have presented here an excellent opportunity for moralizing. The orthodox will quote texts to prove that it was the duty of the Rev. George Howard to bear his blow in meekness—in fact, being thus smitten upon one cheek, to turn the other also. But these orthodox people forget that our Saviour waxed wrathful occasionally; that St. Paul asserted his rights; and that no where in the Bible is the doctrine taught that its disciples are to become contemptible, but exactly the reverse; besides, we may avenge an insult offered to a friend, even if we are disposed to overlook one offered to ourselves.

At any rate, both for the indignity inflicted upon himself, and the insult to his bosom friend, Charles Singerly, conveyed in the words of Henry Hericot, the Rev. George Howard, on this occasion, proceeded to administer to the said Hericot, what he richly deserved, *a thorough and effectual flogging*.

He whipped him till he cried mercy, Hericot's companions acknowledging the justice of his chastisement.

This was THE crowning disgrace of Hericot's life; detected as a forger; cast off by a friend; forced to kneel to a woman; and now *flogged*. Surely Vengeance for the present has culminated.

CHAPTER XII.

JOY.

In a little while after the scenes recorded in our last chapters, an event of joy took place—the wedding of Charles and Julia.

Few persons were invited. The affair was a private one, as all such affairs should be. Weddings are delicate ceremonies, and should be performed delicately.

We have always been opposed to *public* weddings. There has been, to our minds, a certain heartlessness, indelicacy, mock sentiment, and even indecency, in marriages conducted with public display. The emotions of the family, the blushes and the beauty of the bride, the joy of the groom, all these should be sacred from the general gaze.

And so thought Charles and Julia. Only Mrs. Singerly, Sr., Mr. and Mrs. Russell (at whose residence, of course, the marriage ceremony was performed), the Rev. George Howard, who performed the ceremony, Mary Barton, who was all smiles, Julia's old nurse, and five other persons, intimate friends, were present.

The marriage service was performed at the house, where, according to our notions, at least, a marriage should always take place.

Some think that the ceremony should tranpire at the church. This is a mistake, we think, for the simple reason that marriage being essentially a *domestic* affair, it should be most properly conducted in a domestic scene; among the associations of home; among the familiar objects which have surrounded the bride in her virgin days. But be this as it may, Julia and Charles were married at the "residence of the bride's uncle and former guardian," and the Rev. George Howard conducted the service in a most solemn, most befitting, and most delicately-tender manner.

And, God knows, it is a holy and a tender thing, this marriage service. It pledges for life two human hearts. It severs them, as it were, from all other ties of earthly love, and binds them solely and purely to each other. And it gives over the woman almost wholly to the mercies of the man. It separates the bride from her father, her mother, her sisters, her brothers ; it places forever a gulf between her and the dear ones of her maidenhood it rings the knell of her departed friendships ; she has now but one in the world, and that one her husband. Marriage, in modern days, though much to the man, is infinitely more to the woman. She ceases, from the date of her wedding, to have a separate existence ; her life becomes merged in his ; his joys are to be hers ; his sorrows hers ; his wealth hers ; his poverty hers ; she shares his honors, but still more must share his shame ; she is "something" to him, but he is "*all in all*" to her. Oh ! it *is* a solemn thing, and yet a most tender. For do they not vow to love each other all their lives ? Do they not pledge mutual kisses, embraces, endearments ? Do they not promise reciprocal affection *until death* ? "Until death." "Aye, there's the rub" of marriage. To love for a while, to love for many years, even, were comparatively easy. But to love all one's life ! To love when satiety has come ; to love when desire has gone ; to love when long familiarity has caused a certain degree, if not of contempt, at least of indifference. This is precisely what most men cannot do, and yet it is precisely what marriage demands should be done. The only feasible way to overcome this obstacle is for no man or no woman to marry until they are thoroughly convinced in their own minds that they so love their partners that they will never, while living, cease to love them !

This condition was fulfilled in the union of Charles and Julia. Their love had stood the test of fiery trial ; death itself could not destroy it ; and thus the happiness of their marriage was secured.

The service was over. They were now man and wife. Julia Witherson, whom we have so long known, had ceased to exist ; she had vanished from among women, and her place was supplied by Mrs. Charles Singerly, jr.

It was all over. The joy of which they had, for years, dreamed, the bliss for which they had so suffered and waited, had come ; they were married ; they were man and wife—none could separate them now.

Charles clasped his wife in his fervent embrace and thanked his God. If ever the joys of heaven were revealed to mortals, they were laid bare at that supreme moment to our couple.

"All went merry as a marriage bell."

And, meanwhile, where were Henry Hericot, Esq., and Miss Katherine Somers? A few weeks ago, and you would confidently have predicted that at the wedding of Charles and Julia, none would have been more welcome guests than they. And yet this wedding has taken place, and they were *not* present.

Of *course* not. People do not invite forgers and seducers to their social gatherings; people do not ask slanderers and false friends to their weddings. Henry Hericot, Esq., is at this very moment, in the classical language of "fast men," "on a spree," vainly endeavoring to drown, in wine and the smiles of vile women, the bitter remembrance that he is a detected criminal, a disappointed libertine, and a poor man ; that his sins have been sheer follies—that he has been not only a villain, but a fool. While Katherine is seated in her room, cursing the success of Julia, in "carrying off" the handsome, accomplished, fashionable and celebrated Charles Singerly ; envying her wealth, and vainly endeavoring to despise the woman whom she knows despises her. After all, reader, the *right* is generally the best policy.

* * * *

Several hours have passed, and the newly married couple are together—together with "their mother," Mrs. Singerly, senior. The three are locked in a triple embrace. They speak not a word, but their caresses tell volumes—their hearts are full. And in each other's arms each reviews the past, the past fraught with such experiences of sorrow, yet terminating in such true wisdom and true joy. Aye, verily, there is such a thing as a

Providence ! And it had been very beneficent to them. Sweet, indeed, had been the uses of adversity.

As Mrs. Singerly looks mentally back, she sees that her past has taught her, by practical experience, the deep love entertained for her by her son ; the real worth of Julia and Julia's love ; and the noble and great lesson, which she had been so slow to learn, that a woman may fall, yet rise again, may be "erring, yet noble." She thanks God for all her past sorrows, and feels, in her inmost heart, that "He has done all things well."

And as Charles likewise reviews the former years, he, too, feels most thankfully that all has been ordered for the best. Not one pang has been borne, not even one error allowed in vain. His early sin, his youthful excesses, the passionate struggles caused by his love for Julia and the discovery of her shame ; his sudden poverty, the equally sudden reappearance of his youthful victim ; these, and all other events of his history, have each produced good and beneficent results.

They have caused him to repent, to know himself and women, to purify his love, to know better the woman who is now his wife, to expiate his own errors, to become a wiser and more prudent man, to impress upon him, indelibly, the great truth, which men seldom learn, that sin in a man is as criminal as sin in a woman ; and, lastly, to terminate in the perfect love and bliss of the present moment.

As for Julia Witherson (or, as we must now style her, Mrs. Singerly, junior), words cannot express the gratitude and thankful emotion with which she regarded her past in connection with her present. The whole panorama of her history seemed unrolled before her, and as she gazed she was ready to exclaim, with the Psalmist : "Truly, Goodness and Mercy have followed me all the days of my life."

Her youthful errors of religious and moral doctrine, her wild love of Henry Hericot, her fall, her desertion, her remorse, the struggles of her holier love, her noble confessions, her separation from Charles, her devotion to the reformation of her sex, her accession of wealth, all these had brought her to what? Why, to

true doctrine, true honor, true love, self-knowledge, knowledge of the world, practical charity and to the means of realizing it—in company with a husband of her heart, a good, true man of kindred tastes. Her sorrow, shame, and struggles had culminated at last in success, restored purity, and perfect bliss. Yes, she, the outcast from virtue, and the abandoned one by love, was now the pure in the sight of God and the beloved wife of a noble man. And all the woes of the past seemed as nothing when compared with the transport of the present.

Clasped in her mother's and her husband's arms, Julia, like the woman of old, "lifted up her voice and wept," but it was for joy!

The mother kissed her children; the children kissed their mother; and then the children and the mother fell upon their knees and thanked God.

BOOK THE SEVENTH.

A MAN AND A WOMAN DISAPPEAR.

CHAPTER I.

"ONE WEDDING MAKES MANY."

THERE is a good deal of truth in the popular saying which we have placed at the head of this chapter; and its reliability was illustrated in the cases of some of the personages of this history.

Not long after the wedding of Charles and Julia, recorded in our last, Miss Katherine Somers surrendered her white, well-preserved and well-powdered charms and her immaculate virtue to the arms of an old man, but a very rich one. She had been acquainted with this person all her life, as he was a retired merchant, whose business relations with her father had been intimate, but she had never shown him the least encouragement; in fact, she had laughed, with the rest of the world, at the idea of any marriage between herself and him. But the old fellow was persevering and rich. The father of Katherine Somers, whose god was gold, and who only looked upon his daughter in the light of an investment, favored his suit. Katherine herself was foiled in her vanity, as far as Charles Singerly was concerned, and Henry Hericot, the only man she really cared for, was too poor to marry her. She was filled with envy at the happiness and wealth enjoyed by her rival, Julia, to whom, since their separation, she had endeavored in vain to be reconciled, for selfish and mercenary motives. She longed to surpass her former friend in splendor; she was utterly destitute, as we all know,

of any true virtue or real sentiment; and so at last she smiled upon her old suitor.

Rumors became rife of a "marriage in high life." Society was agitated, and gossip was abundant. A few denizens of the "fashionable world," mostly the younger or newer comers, wondered at or blamed Miss Somers for her preposterous choice; but the majority of "society" awarded her credit. "She had won a wealthy prize, she had secured a fine establishment; all honor to her, then!"

So, Miss Katherine Somers, the *fiancée* of a millionaire, was smiled upon and congratulated, and she herself was as happy as if, by uniting herself to a money-bag, she was fulfilling the great end of her existence. Her pet poodle died; she buried it magnificently, but did not grieve too much (though she had been very much attached to it, let us give her all credit); she had another poodle, now, and a better one. It went upon two legs, and never barked, and it spent money on her; oh, a golden poodle!

She dressed superbly, enjoyed her triumph, wore the lowest possible "low necks," the shortest possible "short sleeves," displayed as much of herself as she could; read, in secret, all the "loose" French novels, was addicted to "tight" lacing, talked scandal all the week, went piously to church on Sunday, prepared herself magnificently for the wedding, and at last was married!

The wedding was a recherché affair, with abundance of white dresses, white gloves, bridal favors, presents, ushers, waiters, wine, feasting, kissing, toast-drinking, congratulating, music, company, clergymen, groomsmen, and bridesmaids. They were married in church and the reception took place in the evening at the house of the bride's father. And the predominant sensation in the mind of the newly-made wife was that of triumph, as she thought that her wedding eclipsed even that of Julia Witherson.

And yet, reader, after all, *what* ceremony was it to which society, civilized Christian society, thus lent its sanction, and

greeted with pleasure and applause? Why, merely a ceremony of *legalized sin*. Yes, do not be shocked at our plain answer, for it is the simple truth.

The marriage in this case was what a great writer justly styles, "The loathsome prostitution of a hand without a heart." It was the joining of two bodies merely *without their souls*; it was the surrender of a woman's person to a man without any love between the parties. It was therefore, call it by any fine name you choose, merely and essentially an act of legalized sin. Aye, of the worst kind, being accompanied by *perjury*, by the taking of false oaths of love and honor!

It was really in the sight of heaven the greatest of crimes, this fashionable wedding, in which two distinguished clergymen officiated! This may sound like strange language; so it is; like strong language, too, so it is; but it is language as *true* as strong or strange. Katherine Somers, when she married this old millionaire for his money, committed a viler act than Julia Witherson when she yielded to her love for Henry Hericot, or Fanny Walters when she erred to earn her living. I know the "world," the fashionable world of society, does not think this, but God does!

We tell you "society" itself is but a circle of refined crime. Women are sold as certainly and almost as publicly in America as in Constantinople! Their parents or guardians sell them, or they sell themselves, but they *are* sold. Sometimes pride or vanity buys them; but generally the purchasers are position or money; the latter especially.

And are not women who thus sell, or are thus sold; women who allow themselves to barter, or to be bartered; women who take no heed of hearts but of purses; are not the parties to such a transaction, are they not *all* we say more or less guilty?

Are they not as guilty as the women who walk the streets by night—women who are more foul, it is true, but who have been far more *tempted*?

And yet, of course, a "fashionable" wife would despise a Camille. Well, heaven's eyes are not like ours, heaven be thanked for it!

Katherine Somers was married. Charles Singerly, his wife, his mother, and the Rev. George Howard were *not* present at the ceremony; but Hericot was. And he was very gay. Kate Somers having become rich, he would become rich also. Kate should supply the place of Charles. So he thought as he took the privilege of the occasion and kissed the bride. And the bride, as she received his kiss, and contrasted his handsome face and figure with that of the old and ugly bridegroom, sighed. For if she was capable of loving any one on earth, she loved Henry Hericot.

* * * * * * * *

A few weeks passed, and the honeymoon of the woman whose maiden name was Katherine Somers, was already over, though that of Mr. and Mrs. Charles Singerly, jr., was still in its prime. Katherine had sold herself and had received her full price. She was mistress of a magnificent establishment, had carriages, etc., and wore diamonds; but she had learned to hate her husband. But the pair managed to "keep up appearances." Katherine was far too wise to give the world occasion to talk; and she was as pious as ever—took her husband's money and gave it to the church, and dazzled society, but was far from being happy herself.

How different, and how blessedly different was it with Charles and Julia! Oh! words cannot paint the beauty and the bliss of *their* united lives! We are not poets nor rhapsodists, but we tell you, reader, that neither rhapsody or poem can adequately describe the glory and the charm of a *truly married* life—

> "Two souls with but a single thought,
> Two hearts that beat as one."

Oh! how glorious is true marriage, that real, thorough, entire, changeless union of two hearts made one! Poets

have sung it, philosophers have discoursed upon it, moralists have lauded it, but none yet ever have, ever will, or ever *can* adequately describe it. Michalet has conceived an idea of it in various portions of his recent great works, but even *his* conception is faint of that perfect unity of duality which constitutes a true marriage—a marriage which sometimes though seldom, is realized upon earth ; a marriage which was illustrated in the union of Charles and Julia. The Trinity is, humbly and reverently speaking, a type of real marriage. The former is composed of three persons in one God ; the latter is constituted of two bodies in one soul. There is a mystic, indescribable union in a genuine marriage which the unmarried or ill-mated man or woman can never dream of.

But what a contrast to a true is a *false* marriage, a merely legal, worldly joining of hands and fortunes ! Such a marriage as that of the coquette Katherine and her old husband ! And yet there are ten marriages of the false to one of the true. Most heads of families, most married people, merely *stay* together—they do not *live with* each other ! They jog along the beaten highway of existence, satisfied if they only quarrel occasionally ; content if they but keep up the appearances of affection. Most people, in fact, think *they are sufficiently married, if they are not divorced !* Strange, but true. And we really doubt whether ninety per cent. of all modern marriages are not dead failures, except in the matter of posterity.

Meanwhile, what was Henry Hericot doing ? Nothing but sinning, after the usual method.

Seeing that Singerly took no steps to expose his forgeries, he was relieved from fear upon that score ; and as regards the recontre between himself and the clergyman, only an occasional allusion to it marred his peace. All attempts at reconciliation with Singerly were fruitless ; and comment was elicited at the evident coolness existing between the once "inseparables." But neither Charles or Hericot revealed aught ; and so the breach was but a nine days' wonder. And the latter brooded upon revenge, contenting himself meanwhile with the dissemina-

tion of such petty slanders against Singerly, Julia and Howard, as he could safely utter.

And he devoted himself with a new zeal to the society of his friend Katherine.

Spite her marriage, he was still her *most intimate* friend. Katherine loved Hericot, and Hericot had long been aware of this fact. But the woman was too cold and too cunning to yield to what would have *socially* damned her. And the man was too intent upon other objects to devote the full power of his arts to her. Besides, she was too useful to him now in the way of business; for, in fact, she supplied to him the place formerly held by Charles Singerly.

Before her marriage, Katherine's husband had settled upon her a considerable sum of money. So she was liberally supplied; and so the fashionable, accomplished Henry Hericot, Esq., who had for years subsisted principally upon the bounty of his old "college chum" Singerly, did not now scruple to live upon the means of a woman, and that woman the wife of another man. But more than this. He absolutely employed the money obtained from the wife of one man to ruin and debauch the wife of another. Yes, not satisfied with the usual licentiousness of men of his class, he sought higher game, and determined coolly *pour passer le temps*, to seduce the beautiful wife of a gentleman to whose house his social position gave him the entrée. It was a resolve worthy of an irredeemable villain, and as such, eminently calculated for Henry Hericot.

He set to work, and dealt his cards most admirably. The husband of the lady had recently conceived the notion of becoming a politician. His political aspirations forced him to become a sort of modern Arab—so he was but little at home. While saving his country, he neglected his family, and all this suited exactly Hericot's purposes. The lady herself, the wife, was a young woman of fashionable antecedents, and very beautiful, with a fragile, delicate charm, that was expressive of her character. Like many of her class, she was virtuous, simply because she had never had any temptation to be otherwise.

Her principles were good, but her actions imprudent, and her mind weak.

To this woman Hericot devoted himself, first under the character of her husband's friend and her attendant during his absence, but soon under the thinly-concealed design of becoming her lover. He was careful to give no sudden shock, no palpable offence ; but he bided his time and called to his aid all the tact of which he was master. The lady was very much addicted to the reading of novels, and Hericot accordingly supplied her with all the loose French romances that he could procure. She read them with avidity, and as she was no thinker she lost her horror at their immorality in her admiration of their sentimental beauties. And so her principles were undermined. In addition to this the fatal facilities which fashionable life affords for the intimacy of the sexes, and the vice which results therefrom, favored the purposes of her seducer..

And so, one night, after a visit to the opera, one more murdered virtue cried to God for vengeance. The criminal secret was never discovered. The husband does not know to this very hour the fact of his dishonor. But the wife knows herself to be a blasted being. She would atone for her sin if she could, but, poor soul! she knows not how to do so. She would not have the strength of mind to fulfil any scheme of atonement, even if she had knowledge of any. She carries within her the fearful and unceasing plague of a guilty conscience. She is daily experiencing the terrors "of the worm that never dieth."

And the fact of the destruction of this woman was guessed at by *another* wife, whose secret love for Hericot caused her to watch his movements. She even taxed Hericot with the accusation one day. He implied its truth. And yet this virtuous Katherine, who went to church, who was shocked at the bare idea of reading Bulwer, who had a horror of all poor sinners, who considered herself infinitely more virtuous and religious than her old friend Julia ; this capital wife,

who loved another man better than her own husband, not only did *not* interfere with Hericot's designs, but furnished him with money, though she knew that it would be employed in the basest of manners. Oh! she was an excellent woman, this! Oh! truly; and virtuous exceedingly.

* * * * * *

Henry Hericot succeeded in his intrigue, and was never detected, though by various parties suspected; which suspicions were carried to his *credit* account by "fashionable society."

Not many months after their marriage, the husband of our old friend, the former Katherine Somers, fell seriously sick. It was the opinion of his physicians that if he had received proper attention *at home*, he would not have died. But this may have been a mistake; at any rate, die he did, and was buried. Katherine made a great display of her mourning (she looked well in black, it was a contrast to her fair skin), and just as soon as with any show of decency she could, she was married again, and to Hericot.

She was now rich, with her late husband's gifts and jointures, and could afford to wed the man for whom she had always entertained an almost open affection, though she *knew* him. And he could now afford to marry her. Poverty no longer separated them; their mutual vices were to each other matters of no moment; and so this capitally assorted pair were united.

Katherine's *second* union was fully as false and horrible as her first.

CHAPTER II.

THE THREE PANTHERS.

IT is the night of the performance of a grand circus and menagerie company. They have erected an enormous booth, and fitted up its interior with trees and shrubs and painted scenes, so as to present as romantic and Eastern appearance as possible. And a large crowd are assembled, some delighted, some amused, and really but few bored.

For the entertainment is certainly a more novel one than the inevitable theatres and concerts which by repetition pall upon the public taste. Lions roar, and tigers imitate their example, and hyenas howl, and monkeys and parrots chatter, and the zebra displays his stripes, and there is general variety, noise and confusion.

Amongst those who have come to the "menagerie" to-night in search of an evening's pleasure, perhaps the merriest party stands at present admiring the magnificent plumage of some rare birds in one of the cages. The party we allude to is wholly composed of our old friends. There is Charles Singerly—handsome, elegant, manly. And Julia, looking magnificently; her beaming face, no longer as of old, solemnly and somewhat sadly thoughtful, but full of the heart's happiness. And near her stands the Rev. George Howard and *his* bride, a late acquisition. And Mary Barton and *her* husband, another late ditto. And they are all happy together, and form as pleasant a party as one can set their eyes on in a menagerie or out of it.

And as they talk and laugh, and "look at things" together, the sounds of once familiar voices fall upon their ears. They turn their eyes in the direction, and behold Henry Hericot and

his newly-made wife. Needless to say, neither party notices the other ; it is just anger on one side, and spite and shame upon the other.

Need we say *which* side has the shame and which the anger ?

As our party wander along, amidst the skillfuly-arranged cages, surrounded with trees and encompassed with a background of well-painted oriental scenery, they are borne, in imagination, to the far-off countries from which the wild creatures around them have been brought. They stand before the majestic, tawny lion, as he stalks to and fro in his confined dominions, uttering occasionally his native thunder ; and the tiger, so beautiful and so fierce, who lashes his tail, or stares with his abominable green eyes ; and the ungainly yet majestic elephant, who rises in immensity like a monument of nature, utterly graceless, yet full of intelligence.

As they gaze on these strange animals, and look at the jungles which are painted around them, our friends talk of India and Africa, and tales of tiger-hunts and elephant-catching, and live for a while in a world of enchantment.

Now the performances begin. The audience take seats, and it so happens that Singerly and his friends are immediately before Hericot and his wife. The band play ; the ponies are ridden by the monkies ; then the ponies perform on their own private account ; then some gymnastic feats are gone through with by the human members of the company (who are not half as interesting as the brutes); and, meanwhile, various rude jests are perpetrated by the professional clown of the concern, at which the "small boys" present laugh, as in duty bound ; then the huge elephant is introduced, hops around the ring on three legs, lies down at the word of command, snorts loudly, when so requested, and steps carefully over his master ; various other minor performances take place ; and, lastly, comes the most spicy and thrilling portion of the entertainment—the appearance of a man, *à la* Daniel, in the den of lions.

There is always something grand in the sight of an unarmed

man entering a den filled with wild beasts, even though we know that the beasts are not wild (at least to him), and that he is *not* unarmed in reality. There is a fascination in the embrace of a man and a tiger, in the union of a man and a lion, that always interests and enchains an audience. This part of the performance proceeds satisfactorily, and now comes the grand finale—*he* event of the evening.

A very large panther has been taught to take a part in a romantic drama, or rather dramatic scene. He has learned to apparently struggle fiercely with his keeper, and attempt to devour him, and then gradually yield to the mingled strength and skill of his opponent, and submit to his will; the scene ending with the exhibition, on the part of the panther, of various amusing tricks. The great feature of the affair, however, is the fact that both the keeper and the panther appear, not in the cage, but in the open ring or arena. The man wears no armor, and lies down in the ring, and the beast, restrained by no chains or cage, bounds down upon him from the top of the pavilion. This makes a very novel and spicy entertainment, and the audience are assured that there is not the slightest danger to themselves. But, to make assurance doubly sure, just before this part of the entertainment, a strong fence is erected between the ring and the spectators, so that the panther will bound on one side, while the audience remain on the other. The attendants of the establishment make their appearance, and proceed quickly and skilfully to put up the enclosure or fence. They then retire, and the man himself comes forward, ready for his encounter with the panther. Meanwhile, the audience talk, and whisper, and suggest, in relation to the coming performance. A few timid ones leave the pavilion, but the majority remain. There is just enough of possible risk to give a flavor to the assured novelty of the performance. And now all eyes are turned upon the opening in the top of the pavilion, from which the panther is expected to spring.*

* A performance of this peculiar kind, followed by an unexpected denouement (such as is described in this chapter), really was witnessed by the writer in a provincial city. The liberty has been taken of transferring the *locale* to New York.

It is a somewhat curious spectacle. The large pavilion, with its plants, trees, and tropical scenes; the cages, filled with all manner of strange birds and beasts; while the air is loaded with an endless variety of noises, mingled with the music of the band; and in the distance towers the form of the ungainly elephant, swaying his trunk to and fro; and not far from thence is the skilfully-painted jungle, where, in their concealed cages, the lion and the tiger glare lazily upon the audience, who, arrayed in their modern vestments, sit, looking upwards, waiting for the wild beast, who is to spring upon the man in oriental garb lying in the arena.

The audience wait to see the panther, and they see him; but not in the way they expect or desire. God only knows what original thoughts or ideas entered the panther's brain that night; but we do know this: a sudden roar is heard, a dark form cleaves the air, and the panther descends, not upon his keeper, but—among the audience!

Instead of bounding perpendicularly, the beast makes a spring at a wide angle, falls on the wrong side of the fence, and alights, as luck will have it, in the middle passage or aisle of the auditorium. Having alighted there, with bristling hair, wild fierce eye, supple form, and low, horrible roar, he prepares to spring upon the terrified human beings around him. All his training is forgotten; his native, fierce instincts are aroused; he dreams, possibly, he is again in his wild eastern home; he is no longer a "performing animal," but a genuine panther.

Words cannot adequately express the consternation and confusion of the audience. Shrieks rend the air from all quarters; persons far removed from all proximity to the danger are as terrified and as noisy as those in the immediate neighborhood. Women faint (of course, just at the moment they should be most active and self-possessed), and men lose, in the shock, all their sex's courage (of course, just at the moment when it is most needed). All sense of propriety is lost; the mad instinct of self-preservation reigns supreme. In the tumult several are bruised, even seriously wounded, and a young child is absolutely crushed

to death. The band ceases to play, and the lions and tigers in their cages, moved by the tumult, commence to roar and howl.

Henry Hericot, who, with his wife, was seated close to the spot on which the panther alighted, is struck with terror. He displays in this supreme moment, his supreme cowardice and meanness. Forgetful of his wife, who trembles at his side; mindful only of himself, he leaps absolutely over the heads of those behind him. Only when at a considerable distance from his original location, does he pause to look at his escaped danger, or to think of his abandoned wife. Julia and Charles, who are close to the panther, clasp each other in their loving arms. The rest of their party, though they endeavor to escape (which is impossible, owing to the press of the multitude), evince no unworthy fear. But Mrs. Katherine Hericot, *neé* Somers, is left to face her fate and the panther alone.

And it certainly seems as though the panther has determined to claim her for his prey; as if the beast has, after a survey of the audience, singled out *her* particularly for himself. Is it because *both* the beast and the woman are alike beautiful and treacherous? At any rate, the panther fastens his wild, dread, terribly-fascinating eye upon the shrinking Katherine, who lacks even the strength to call upon the heaven she has so long pretended to worship, and who bitterly feels in her heart of hearts that even her husband has deserted her. As she stares, the beast glares and crouches, and then prepares for a final spring. A dizziness comes over her; her heart ceases to beat; her eyes become dimmed; a cold sweat seizes her; she gives herself up for lost; she fancies the maddened beast clutching at her throat.

But no, the fatal spring is not made. At the eleventh hour a man comes to her relief. A form rushes forward and diverts the attention of the panther who prepares for this new enemy. It is the Rev. George Howard who has caused this diversion. And now the spell of terror is broken, and soon the clergyman, and the keepers, and attaches of the establishment, who by this time have been gathered together,

and are prepared for action, secure, at their own imminent peril, the enraged beast.

The danger is over!

* * * * * * *

A man who fears his God does *not* fear men or beasts peril or death. The Christian is seldom a coward—vide th Rev. George Howard.

The man who does *not* fear his God, generally *does* fear something or some one far less worthy. The blasphemer is generally a poltroon—vide Henry Hericot.

* * * *

After the panther had been secured, the sneaking Hericot rejoined his wife, who, from that moment, began, for the first time in her life, to despise him.

But just as he was on the point of returning to her, a hand was laid upon his arm; and looking up, he recognized the frowning face of Fanny Walters.

"Villain!" she hissed through her set teeth into his unwilling ear, "you remember my warning when we last met."

He did, indeed, remember. It flashed across his mind vividly the memory of her words when he last saw her. She had then promised to watch him; and if he sinned more she had vowed to take vengeance upon him. His guilty fears agitated him; but he spoke not, and she continued:

"I have watched you; I know all; I have been on your track; I know your *last* victim" (mentioning to Hericot's utter astonishment, the name of the wife whom he had betrayed); "nothing can cure you but death; you must be damned yourself, or you will damn others. This is your second warning; your *third* will be your last for ever. Arthur Hamilton, Henry Hericot, betrayer, adulterer, murderer, coward, beware, you have escaped *one* panther, but you will find ere long that a maddened, vengeful woman is a panther from whom there is *no* escape."

She ceased; he looked around; he had not lost a word;

but he had not dared to raise his eyes; and now she was gone.

The panther proper, the wild brute beast, was by this time safely secured. Panther second, the fair but treacherous Katherine, now subdued and agitated, was recovering from her recent shock; and panther the third, the most beautiful, most fierce, and most dangerous of all, Fanny Walters, had disappeared.

But in his dreams that night, of all the three panthers, Henry Hericot dreamt of the third one most!

CHAPTER III.

A DIALOGUE AND A DREAM.

One morning, a few days subsequent to the events recorded in our last, Mrs. Katherine Hericot, tempted by the beauty of the weather, sallied out, gorgeously arrayed, for a promenade upon Broadway. She went alone, for her husband had not yet risen, though it was full noon. He had been on a debauch the night previous, and was "sleeping off" the effects. He had tired somewhat of his wife already, and she had quarreled with him, having reproached him for his recent cowardice. And so Mrs. Katherine Hericot sallied forth on her solitary promenade, conscious that she looked well, and was well dressed. She walked gaily and proudly on, and soon was in the midst of a crowd of fashionable promenaders like herself.

But she experienced an extraordinary interruption. A woman passed her, seemed to recognize her, turned, joined her, and, touching her on the sleeve, said, abruptly, "I wish to speak with you."

Mrs. Katherine Hericot, astonished, looked at the woman keenly. The stranger was richly dressed, beautiful, too, undoubtedly, with superb charms which filled Mrs. Hericot with a momentary sentiment of envy. For every pretty woman by instinct hates another. But the stranger had an indescribable air, an indefinable something in her look and manner, which a woman of Katherine's description would understand as quickly and as thoroughly as a man. And, struck by this, Mrs. Hericot, having recovered from her surprise, addressed the stranger thus:

"Who are you?"

The words were uttered with a curled lip. The stranger noticed the sneer and the sharp tone, and replied—

"My name is Fanny Walters, and I am what you imagine."

And the speaker looked full in the face of her companion.

"What do you want with me?" asked Katherine, with a movement expressive of disgust. "How dare you address me! Leave me."

"Not till I have spoken to you concerning your husband."

"My husband!" repeated Katherine in astonishment.

"Yes, your husband, Arthur Hamilton, or Henry Hericot. I would speak to you of him."

This dialogue took place in the street. Katherine grasped the "situation." If she walked with this strange creature, attention would be excited. On the other hand, she ardently desired to hear what the woman had to say. She looked around. They were, at this moment, near the entrance of a large looking-glass establishment, in the lower story of which was an "art-gallery;" it would be better there than in the streets.

"Follow me," she cried to her companion; and, seeing first that she was not observed, Katherine Hericot entered the "art-gallery," followed by Fanny Walters.

"And now, what have you to tell me of my husband?" asked Katherine.

The gallery was deserted at the present moment; the two women were its only occupants.

"He is a villain!" was the emphatic rejoinder of Fanny Walters. "He is a liar, a perjurer, a seducer, a heartless cheat."

Alas! the wife, in her own secret heart, felt that this woman spoke the truth concerning her husband. But her lips said—

"How dare you speak thus to me, woman?"

"I dare anything—I dare tell this to the world; for I can prove it."

"What has my husband done to you, that you should talk of him thus?"

"What has he done to me? God! you ask me this! He has murdered me."

"Why, you stand before me alive."

"Yes, but my happiness is dead; my honor is murdered; and *he*, your husband, has ruined me, body and soul, forever. You understand me?"

Aye, her listener understood her meaning thoroughly Katherine Hericot had known her husband to be a libertine before she married him. She turned to Fanny Walters and asked—

"And why do you tell this to *me*, woman? What is all this to me?"

"Ah! you are just the woman to be the wife of such a villain. You two are a well-matched pair."

This was too much for Katherine's patience. "Such words," she exclaimed, with a look and tone of the utmost scorn, "and from such a creature!"

"Aye," retorted Fanny Walters, proudly and bitterly, "and yet this 'creature' is, in the sight of heaven, a purer and a truer woman than such as thou. Aye, draw up your proud form and cast upon me looks of would-be indignant virtue; but again I tell you that, in the eyes of truth and God, sinner as I am, I am less sinful than thou. I fell through love; you sold yourself for gold. I sin through necessity, because I have no choice; you have erred without necessity and without temptation. You encourage and practice all kinds of vice, so that it be but fashionable; I am a living warning against it. You hide your sins under the cloak of an abominable hypocricy; I am at least open and honest in my wickedness. I know that the world, comparing us together, would cast its verdict in favor of you, the hypocrite; but as sure as there is a final judgment, so surely will He render judgment in favor of me, the sinner."

She spoke these words boldly. And in her secret soul, Katherine Hericot felt their truth. She remembered her last conversation with Julia Witherson, and the plain facts that were told her then. Her conscience, which slept on the average three hundred and sixty-three days out of the three hundred and sixty-five, now

awoke for a moment, and told her that what she heard then and now were solemn facts. She was silent for a space.

It was a peculiar situation. The quiet, deserted art-gallery, so contrasted with the noisy world outside ; in its midst the two women, both beautiful, and opposed in their beauty ; both richly attired, and contrasted in their attire—the woman of the fashion, and the woman of the street ; their faces expressive of their feelings, of shame and triumph.

But Katherine Hericot recovered herself, and was again the cool, shrewd hypocrite. Besides, she feared to carry on this interview further. They might be, at any moment, interrupted or overheard. She said : "Woman, have you anything to tell me? Abuse of myself or my husband—is this all you have to utter ?" Then her curiosity pressing upon her irresistibly, she asked—"How do you know anything concerning us ?"

"I met Arthur Hamilton, my betrayer, or rather, Henry Hericot, your husband, in the house where I live, in the hell where I make my home. It was the first time we had met since he had deserted me. He would have renewed his arts upon me ; but I drove him from me. And I warned him. And since then I have made it the business of my life to watch him, and all connected with him. I know all his recent movements ; all your history ; all the history of the unfortunate woman, the wife, whom, with your knowledge, he ruined before he married you. I have followed him ; I have inquired concerning him ; I have set spies upon him ; I have given my time and money to the search ; I have set my wits to work. And I know all. I have seen you and he together, while you were still the wife of another ; I have watched him in the streets and in the theatres with the wife of his friend. I have guessed all. I know all."

"And wherefore have you watched him thus ?"

"Because I have sworn to myself and him to do so."

"And wherefore do you tell me, his wife, this ?"

"Because, if you care for him, if you love him, (if such as you *can* love), you will *warn* him."

"Against what ?"

"Against further lies, sins, amours, intrigues. Against making more such victims as myself. For as surely as he sins again with woman, so surely will he die, and by a woman's hand—by mine!"

"You will kill him, then?"

"I will take justice on him. Not for myself, but for my sex. *I* have forgiven him. I spared him. But I warned him that if he murdered more women, I should avenge them and save others. Aye! I would end his life as one would destroy a serpent, and with as little remorse. Since my warning he *has* sinned once; and *you* were his accomplice. You knew that he sought to betray the wife of his friend; yet you saved her not—but smiled upon him. I met him a few nights since; that night he played the coward, and left you to the panther. I warned him again; and now I tell you that if he sins, he dies. Tell him so for me, and watch him that he errs not; for, as sure as there is a God or a devil, if he slays more women, I shall slay him."

Strange words these for one fashionably-dressed woman to address to another in an art-gallery; but passion knows no etiquette.

Katherine Hericot stood for a moment overwhelmed, as it were, by the solemn vehemence of her companion, whose frame dilated, whose eyes flashed, and whose magnificent arm was raised threateningly. But the former soon recovered her self-possession, and said to the latter, with a show of boldness:

"Do you know that you are placing yourself in my power? that I can have you arrested for your murderous intentions?"

"Do so. I will then expose you both, and, spite of all laws and all precautions, will dog his footsteps till we meet, and then kill him. Arrest me; and it will seal your shame and his death. And now I leave you. Mine is no idle threat, as he may yet find. Let him then beware *of* women, or die *by* woman. The woman of the town warns the man of the town. See to it that we do not meet again."

And—she was gone! The sound of her firm tread was heard departing.

Katherine Hericot stood in the quiet art-gallery alone. She seemed like one who had just awoken from a dream ; for all that had happened was so far removed from the ordinary experience of life that, at first, she almost persuaded herself that she had been in a day-dream, a trance. But this delusion soon vanished. She felt that she had been in the real presence of a desperate woman, justly infuriated against her husband ; and that she had received for him an awful warning. Memories of tragedies in real life, in which women had slain their betrayers, rushed upon her mind, and she trembled.

She hastily left the art-gallery, descended the stairs, passed out into the gay sunshine, and, walking hastily through the thronged streets, neglectful of the smiles of her numerous fashionable acquaintances, reached her home, but found her husband absent. Since her departure from the house, he had risen and gone out, having left word with the servants that he would not return until late at night. And yet this pair had been only a few weeks married.

The day wore on ; and evening came upon the earth. The wife partook in silence of her sumptuous but lonely dinner, and then retired to her room. She waited there till midnight ; and, at last, her husband returned. He had evidently been drinking deeply ; was not exactly intoxicated ; but certainly out of humor. He met his wife gruffly, exclaiming :

"Well, why do you wait up for me in this manner? I do not come home any earlier on your account, do I?"

Indeed, he did not. But Katherine forbore answer or complaint. She merely told him all that had transpired in her interview with Fanny Walters, and besought him, if he would not for love restrain his sins, at least to do so for *fear*.

The intelligence sobered Hericot. He affected to care nothing about the matter, mocked at his wife, and laughed at her requests. But when he retired, his face told a far different tale his guilty soul was agitated with a coward dread. He was frightened as well as astonished at his victim's knowledge of his recent movements ; and he felt that the words she had spoken to his

wife to-day were terribly earnest ones. His conscience troubled him with a pang that was as sharp as it was rare. But toward morning he fell into a sleep ; and in this sleep he dreamed.

He saw a jail, a prison-van, and a crowd of men and boys. From out the van came a convicted thief, who, for some petty larceny, was to be confined in the jail. And, as the man stepped forth, guarded by the officer, the crowd around laughed at him, jeered him, called him thief ; and the cup of his degradation was quaffed to its very dregs.

Again, he saw in his dream a magnificently-furnished room ; and seated in that room a man and a woman. The woman was beautiful, young, and confiding; and she was listening blushingly to the man, who, skilled in all the arts of fascination, was bending over her. The man tempted—the woman fell.

Then the scene suddenly changed to a gorgeous club-room, and there sat this very young man, narrating his victory over the woman. His comrades applauded and caressed him; Hericot tried to get a glimpse of the young man's face, and, lo ! it was his own.

Again, he saw in his dream a gallows erected in a public place, and on the gallows swung lifeless in the air the body of a man ; and lo ! the man was the same criminal who had been seen awhile since entering the jail from the prison-van. From a thief he had become a murderer; and this was the end of the assassin.

Then he saw in his dream a young man who was surrounded by gay companions, and was in the midst of revel, suddenly stabbed to the heart by a woman ; and lo ! the man was the same he had just seen in the luxurious parlor ; was, in short, himself ; while the woman seemed the same as she who had then been betrayed ; and suddenly her face was turned full upon him ; and lo ! it was the angry face of Fanny Walters. Such was the end of the seducer.

Lastly, he saw in his dream a vast space ; in this space were a host of men and women ; a majestic Presence, half-

cloud and half light, was seated on a throne to judge the people; and among the people stood the young man (the seducer, Hericot himself) and the criminal (the thief and murderer), and the woman, with a face like Fanny Walters. The Judge turned to the criminal who had died upon the gallows, and sentenced him to further punishment in the world to come. And then the Judge turned to the woman, and for her too easy yielding, and her too furious vengeance, likewise doomed her to a certain term of retribution. Yet He still held out to them both the hope that, as they had been sorely tempted and had terribly suffered upon earth, they might, in the lapse of ages, be restored to happiness and heaven.

But, then, with an awful frown, and a voice of angry thunder, the Judge turned Him to the last of the three, Hericot himself, and he sentenced him to eternal perdition and the most fearful torments. His doom was ten times more horrible than that of his two companions. And when he complained of this, the Judge cried to him, in accents that tolled the knell of all hope, "Thy sin is ten times more abominable than theirs; and thou didst not suffer aught on earth. Every blessing was continuously showered upon thee, and thou didst persistently abuse them all. Thou wast not tempted as these thy companions were; and yet thou didst spend thy life in tempting others. The woman was a passive sinner; thou wast the active devil. The murderer did but kill the body, but thou, with abominable arts, and thy long, selfish, luxurious, godless life, hast killed a host of souls. Depart for ever into outer darkness."

Hericot awoke; but was it all a dream?

CHAPTER IV.

"VENGEANCE IS MINE; I WILL REPAY, SAITH THE LORD."

HENRY HERICOT arose early the next morning. It promised to be a beautiful day; and as his fears vanished, he laughed at his own terrors; he felt a man again. Why should he be frightened at a woman's words? His exaltation was as great as his recent depression. He determined not to surrender his amours, but only carefully conceal them, so that Fanny Walters should not be able to trace them.

"Meanwhile," soliloquized he, "I will find a way of getting rid of that Fanny; and until I have succeeded in this object, why, I will betake myself to the country and hunt my game in the 'rural districts.' By the bye, I will commence my agricultural schemes this very day. I will seek out that pretty little country girl I met last summer at C——, and who took such a fancy to me! I shall reap the benefits of her penchant. I will tell that jealous wife of mine I am going out of town for a few days on business. Capital *idea.* Now, Fanny Walters, catch me this time if you can. Not that I believe the girl would hurt me after *all.* She is merely jealous and wants to frighten me. But in vain. Vive la bagatelle."

So humming a lively opera air, Hericot took his breakfast, made his excuses to his wife with cool indifference, and departed.

He reached the little village of C——, and under a specious pretext and an assumed name, took up his abode at the inn. He visited the neighboring farmers; was hospitably received, met the girl of whom he was in search, cast his coils about her, lied, swore, protested, quoted poetry, sang,

talked of city life, dazzled, bewildered, and at last ruined her. He was an adept at this sort of thing; and having accomplished his purpose, in less than a fortnight (when a woman loves and is weak it does not take many days to damn her), he returned to the city, and to his wife, as gay as ever.

"I have outwitted my wrathful 'Fanny,' as she styles herself, this time at all events."

So he said, but did he do so? It is a very difficult thing to outwit a woman who has once had her eyes opened.

Hericot found the city very lively on his return. The season was at its height, and he plunged, with renewed zest, after his rural sojourn, into metropolitan gayeties. He was invited to all the leading fashionable parties, and as he was a perfect dancer, never lacked for partners. He was regular in his attendance on his "club," and as a brilliant conversationist, was always welcome. And so he enjoyed his butterfly existence.

After all it is a very pleasant life, that of the male human butterfly. To rise at a luxuriously late hour; to partake of an excellent breakfast; to array one's valuable person in expensive and comfortable garments; to promenade with one's fashionable friends the fashionable streets, exchanging bows, and compliments, and salutations, and hearing and uttering pleasant gossip and light scandal; to while away the hours at billiards or cards; to feast on capital wines and French dishes; to pay visits; to attend the theatre or opera nightly; to patronize balls and to shine at parties; to have all your surroundings at home and abroad luxurious, artistic, elegant and costly; to be one of the favored few who neither toil or spin yet who reap all the rewards of labor which they never perform; to have existence all sunshine; to idle and to sin, yet suffer none of the penalties of sin or idleness. Ah! this is a charming career? And such was the life of the rich, fashionable, handsome, accomplished, admired, successful Henry Hericot.

Oh! it sometimes tempts one to believe that, as the poet says, "There are no gods in heaven" when we see such worthless men leading such enviable lives! But there is an old and wise proverb, "Count no man happy till his death."

One night a new actress was announced to make her debut at the —— theatre, in the character of Camille. The debutante was said to be charming and gifted, and there was a certain romance connected with her story. She was of a fashionable and wealthy family, and adopted the stage without any pecuniary necessity on her part, and against the wishes of her family, actuated solely by the love she felt for the dramatic profession. Of course the management of the theatre made the most of this romantic capital, and, by skilfully worded "cards" in the papers, and "on dits" in the fashionable journals, excited quite a "sensation" in the public mind concerning the appearance of this "rara avis."

Consequently on the night referred to the theatre was crowded by a refined audience such as generally patronized the opera. Charles Singerly and wife were there in full dress. The Rev. George Howard and his wife were also present, as likewise were our old acquaintance, Mary Barton and her husband. There was, in the language of the bills, "a full and fashionable house." Of course Hericot was there, accompanied (not, of course,) by his wife, who looked very charmingly, and smiled upon her numerous acquaintances (all saving her old friend Julia) with the greatest suavity.

After the usual amount of orchestra and overture, the curtain rose upon "Camille," and the young debutante made her appearance. She was very warmly greeted, partly by the audience in genuine kindness, partly and principally by the "claquers" attached to the theatre, who applauded because it was their business to do so. She was young and handsome, with dark eyes, dark hair, and dark complexion, and, therefore, looking more like a Jewess than a French girl. She played her part well, however, like one who had studied the

character thoroughly, and she satisfied the audience. Still, her delineation of "Camille" lacked nature. There was art and plenty of it, there was feeling, and beauty, and a musical voice, and grace of movement, but, then, it needs more than all these to constitute a true Camille. It requires, in fact, an experience, a personal experience or observation of the sins and sorrows of the world of women, which few young women, or women whose lives, like that of the debutante, have been passed in "the charmed circle of society," can attain to.

But be this as it may, the new "star" ascended the theatrical firmament in glory; was the cynosure of all eyes, and the theme of all tongues. She was "called out" at the end of each act, and received the usual quantum of bouquets, two out of three of which were, of course, bestowed by the regular agents of the theatre.

Hericot was quite delighted with the new "star," and spoke of her enthusiastically to his friends in the lobby.

During the interim, between the second and third acts, he and a number of his fast friends adjourned to a fashionable drinking saloon in the neighborhood of the theatre, and partook freely of stimulating liquors. He had previously been in high spirits; he now became the centre of attraction. He jested and laughed, and seemed the soul of merriment.

"How I do envy you, Hericot," said one of his friends.

"What do you do that foolish thing for, Harry?" replied Hericot.

"Why," answered Harry, "you have led such a jolly life all the time. Your career has been one of a thousand; nothing to do since the day you were born and everything to enjoy. You were petted when a child; you shirked all work at school; you managed to obtain "honors" at college without striving for them; or, to tell the truth, deserving them; you were never rich yourself, yet you have always had rich friends, and enjoyed all the advantages of money; you

have always lived well, dressed well, and had as much sport as any five men I know of; you have been most devilish successful with the women, every girl you meet falls in love with you; and yet, though you are everlastingly engaged in intrigues, you never yet have compromised yourself, or got into a scrape; you are handsome; you can talk money out of a man, and the heart out of a woman; you can sing, dance, play the piano, beat nine men out of ten at billiards, are always lucky at cards, can hold more wine than any other man, can eat more than most; never have headaches are never sick, have the best of credit everywhere, though you never pay Dam'me, Hericot, your whole life has been all couleur de rose. While other men have had their cloudy moments, your existence has been all a gleam of sunshine which has lasted for twenty-nine years."

"My dear Harry," with a laugh replied Hericot, "how eloquent you are. I really never knew how happy and lucky I have been till now."

"Oh, laugh if you choose; you know you have been a d——d sight more lucky than you deserve," persisted his companion.

"I don't know about that, after all," interrupted a third; "Hericot deserves all he has managed to get; for he understands human nature and the world, and has always made it a rule to use them both as suits his own purposes."

"That I can endorse," cried a fourth.

"And I," "and I," cried a fifth and a sixth.

"Well, gentlemen," said Hericot, "since you seem to insist upon it, I confess that I *do* understand what it pleases you to denominate as the 'world' and 'human nature.' I also confess to the soft impeachment of using them both to accomplish my own purposes. In this I only follow the example of every other man of sense who has ever lived."

"Bravo, old fellow," interrupted one of his companions; "I like your candor and your creed. Down with all old fogy notions of principle, honor, religion, and all that cant, say I. My motto is, 'each for himself and the devil take the hindmost.'"

This noble avowal was hailed in all quarters with enthusiasm; and the conversation now turned upon the folly of religion.

"Damn the priests and their Bibles," cried Hericot; "what do people in the nineteenth century want with religion? It did well enough for the old times; it may do well enough even now for the 'rural districts'; but men of the world know better than to be deceived by it. As far as *I* am concerned, I have never been able to satisfy myself that there is even any *God*. I can see no signs of Him; and I can't see of what use he is—except to frighten old women. Of course, we all think thus. We would not *say* so to everybody; for we must humbug the world, if it insists upon being humbugged; but I know that on this matter men of sense cannot have two opinions. There is either no God, or he is of devilish little use in His own world. But come," he continued, with a fashionable oath, "let us take one glass more round, and then to the theatre—for the third act must have already begun."

The "one glass more round" was taken.

"Here's to the new star of the theatrical world, whose ascension we have to-night witnessed."

"Bumpers, gentlemen, bumpers." And the toast was drank with all the honors.

"My word for it, gentlemen," cried one, "Hericot will be the favorite satellite of this new star before the month is out. I saw him watching her with a smile all the performance. And I know what *that* means with him."

The man was right. Hericot, in his own mind, had determined to try his arts as soon as possible upon the *débutante* of the evening. She was too tempting game to be allowed to pass by without a shot.

"And now for the theatre," cried the group of "fast" friends. And they accordingly went thither.

Standing at one of the doors Hericot recognized his valet—leaving his friends he approached his servant and said:

"Well, Thomas, what is it? Why are you here? Do you wish to see the play?"

To Hericot's credit be it stated, that, singularly enough, he was always polite, sometimes even kind, to his servants, who were, on their part, much attached to him. It is singular that a man so systematically selfish and thoroughly heartless should display such a trait as this. But human nature is full of remarkable inconsistencies.

"No, sir—thank you, sir," replied the valet, Thomas,—"or at least I should like to see the play; but I came to give you this note, which was left at the house a few minutes after you had started for the theatre. The man who gave it to me told me to hand it to you as soon as possible. So, as I knew where you were, I thought I would bring it to you, sir."

"You have done right, Thomas," replied his master, taking the letter,—"and here is a ticket. You can stay and see the play."

"Thank you, sir," said the valet, and wended his way to the entrance to the gallery.

Hericot opened the letter and read it. And, as he read, his face flushed with triumph. The letter contained glorious news. A distant relative of his, whom he had not seen for years, of whom he had scarcely heard, on whom even he, calculating as he was, had never thought of calculating, had died out in California, having accumulated a large fortune. This (as he had died without a will, and as Hericot was nearest living heir,) would fall to the lot of Hericot himself. It was valued at nearly a million of dollars.

This good luck staggered the recipient; he rushed to the nearest drinking-saloon, and swallowed a draught of brandy. He then re-read the letter; it was all as has just been said. He would soon be the possessor, sole and uncontrolled, of nearly a million of dollars.

"Good God!" he cried, (even he, who said that he did not believe in a God), "what a freak of fortune!"

He could not, at first, comprehend the full extent of his new wealth; but he knew the value of money, and he soon appreciated his "luck" at its full extent. He returned to the theatre.

And. as he walked through the lobby, and gazed at the crowd within, many of whom he knew intimately, he felt as though he were a king—a prince among his fellows.

He saw Julia seated in one of the boxes. "Ah," thought he, "now I shall be able to gratify my revenge upon her, her husband, and their clerical friend. I can outshine them all, and fill their hearts with envy. I can make the proud Julia wish that she had been more kind to me of late. I shall show Singerly that I am independent of his gold and far above it. Perhaps I may be able yet to defy him and to have my full revenge. For wealth can do anything, and I am rich, thanks to my relative, who was kind enough to go to hell before his time to accommodate me. As for that canting Howard, I shall be even with him yet; I shall play a sort of Macbeth to his Banquo, and shall hire me some strong fellows to beat him as he once beat me. Ah, money, money! How gay I shall be! I have many years before me, and a million in my possession! I shall travel, drink, flirt, eat, sleep, hate whom I like, say and do as it seems to me best, and, above all, *no woman* shall be able to resist me and my million. I never have had much trouble with the sex; I shall now have even less. Damme, I have always said there was no God. I am mistaken. There *is* a good-natured God somewhere, and I must be one of his favorite prophets. Nothing can resist me now. I shall commence my new career to-night; shall form this new actress' acquaintance, and then—well, shall I not be irresistible? Am I not worth almost a million?"

So ran the mental soliloquy of Henry Hericot, Esq. But now the curtain fell upon the third act, and several of his "friends" strolled into the lobbies. "Why, where on earth have you been during this last half hour?" they cried. Hericot explained to them his late good news, and his heart swelled with pride as he saw the envy and the admiration he excited amongst his acquaintances. "Damme," cried the man who had, a little while before, extolled Hericot's good fortune, "nothing surprises me in the way of chance happening to you. If you were to be made a king, I should say it was perfectly natural. I respect-

fully move that from this time he be known as *King* Hericot."

And "King Hericot" he was accordingly called the remainder of the evening. But all history proves to us that even "kings" must die!

Soon the performance of "Camille" drew to a close; and the audience began to disperse. Hericot, who seldom played the part of cavalier to his wife, but trusted her to the politeness of her acquaintances, finding that Katherine had secured an escort, was on the point of "excusing" himself, so that he might prosecute his designs upon the actress of the evening. Charles Singerly and wife, the Rev. George Howard and wife, and Mary Barton and husband, were chatting pleasantly together as they neared the exit doors. The lobbies were filled with the departing hundreds hurrying outwards, and there was a general hum of voices and tread of many feet, and rustlings of hundreds of silks.

When, suddenly there was a tumult in the crowd, a rushing noise, a groan, a shriek, general exclamations of surprise and horror, and intense excitement.

"What is the matter yonder?" asked a man in the crowd, who was standing at some distance from the centre of excitement, of a person more favorably situated to learn what was going on. "A woman fainted? Any one robbed?—or what?"

"No," was the reply; "none of these. A murder has been committed, I believe. A woman has stabbed a man."

It was even so. An hour or two after the affair, two gentlemen, who had been present at the time, were talking of the matter. "I was just advancing," said one of the gentlemen in question, "towards the middle exit door, with my wife on my arm, when I suddenly saw a woman rushing through the crowd. She was tall and fine-looking, but seemed like a tigress, as she darted towards this man, and then I heard her hiss distinctly in his ear, 'You have been warned twice, and sinned twice. You thought the country would conceal your last offence, and so you will sin again. But thus I avenge my sex and myself,' or words to

that effect. For, of course, as you may suppose, the whole affair was so terribly strange, that I cannot vouch for the exact language."

"And what did the man she addressed do?"

"He seemed stricken, like a guilty thing. He turned as white as a sheet, and trembled visibly. No doubt he had injured this girl, and deserved all he received. At any rate, before any of the spectators could interfere, before they had even fully comprehended her strange words, she raised her arm (and a beautiful arm it was), and we saw a dagger gleaming. We then divined her purpose, and several gentlemen rushed towards her to stay the descent of the murderous weapon. But in vain. They were too late. She stabbed him mortally. He fell, exclaiming, 'Hell, she has kept her word!'"

"Depend upon it, this fellow was a bad man, and, after all, only met the fate which he deserved, and from the hands of one of his own victims, most probably. What was his name?"

"Henry Hericot, I am told. He was a married man and a very 'fast fellow.'"

"Did he die instantly?"

"Yes."

"And what was the name of the woman?"

"She gave her name as Fanny Walters. She was once a decent girl; but has, for some years, been a woman of the town."

"And this man seduced her, I suppose; and made her what she is?"

"So she says."

"Then, by G——d, the fellow deserved to die like a dog! And I cannot find it in my heart to blame the woman."

"Nor I."

So talked two strangers late on the night of the murder of Henry Hericot. But there were some things connected with the affair which few or none knew or can know, save ourselves and our readers, and God, who seeth all things.

Thus, all who were present could behold some of the leading

features of the scene. They could see the theatre lobbies decorated with pictures ; the bright gas-light, and the gayly-dressed crowd, mingling in the noisy street outside. They could behold the woman, Fanny Walters, spring forward and raise the dagger ; and several gentlemen, among whom was Charles Singerly, rush forward to stay her hand, but in vain. They could behold a man, the Rev. George Howard, receive the form of the murdered Hericot as he fell, and exclaim, as he gazed upon him, "God, have mercy upon his soul, for he has perished in his sins." They could also behold a woman, Katherine Hericot, *née* Somers, utter a piercing shriek, and fall senseless into the arms of those around her ; and several other ladies, among whom were Mrs. Charles Singerly, and she who was formerly Mary Barton, evince an extraordinary interest in the scene. They could also see the tall form of the murderess, with the bloody dagger still in her hand, gazing, with hate and triumph and yet with a latent pity and a not wholly buried love, upon her victim.

But they could not fully appreciate what we know : and this is, that Henry Hericot was murdered by one of his victims, in the hour of his pride of success and fortune, and that two other of his victims were present when he received his retribution. For not only she who was once Julia Witherson, was near to Hericot in the crowd when he was struck ; but not far from Julia stood also, gazing in horror, the wife of Hericot's friend, whom he had dishonored. She, too, had come to witness Camille to-night, and had witnessed a tragedy in real life.

Was it not one of those coincidences which sometimes take place, that thus, at the moment he least expected, fate should fall upon the villain, by the hand of one whom he had injured, in the presence of two others, from whose hands he merited a similar fate—with a fourth woman, he had attempted to ruin, looking fearfully upon him ? And near him, in his last moments, the priest he had insulted and the friend whom he had deceived ?

Providence sometimes arranges the denouement of a man's life as dramatically as any play-wright.

Thus perished instantly, in a theatre, a successful and envied sybarite and libertine. Thus died, in a moment, the guilty heir to an enormous fortune, in the zenith of his pride and vice. Thus, in the midst of those he had wronged, and by the hand of her he had wronged, was sent to his God and Judge, without a warning, the unshriven soul of the liar, forger, seducer, and blasphemer, known as *King Hericot!*

There is a text of Scripture, "Vengeance is mine. I will repay, saith the Lord."

CHAPTER V.

JUDGMENT AND JUSTICE.

Fanny Walters, after the murder of Henry Hericot, awaited her trial in prison. She was calm, cool, and self-possessed ; she betrayed no agitation ; she seemed like one who was pursuing a definite, fixed course of action, and was determined to follow it unto the end.

She was visited in her confinement by a few of her "friends," women of her own class, who offered her all that they had to give, poor creatures—their sympathy. For though not capable of a vengeance like that of Fanny, they could understand and appreciate, from their own personal experiences, at least some of the motives which had led their companion to the perpetration of this fearful deed.

Fanny was also visited by Julia and Howard ; but she said but little to them.

"Call upon me," she exclaimed, "*after* my trial—after my fate is decided ; then I will speak fully to you. But now I have nothing to say. Leave me. Do not think me insensible to your kindness ; but leave me for the present."

One or two lawyers, interested in her case, struck by her beauty, and knowing the general outlines of her story, as given in the newspapers, offered their professional services ; but she declined them.

"I will plead my case myself," she said ; and she adhered to this strange determination. What her thoughts might be in the long, dreary hours of her confinement, we will not pretend to describe. All that we know is that "she gave no sign."

The day of her trial arrived, and the court-room was crowded. All murder cases have a large audience ; but on this occasion the

crowd was unusually great, as it was known that the prisoner intended to plead for herself.

At the appointed time the bustle of the court-room ceased, and all eyes were fastened upon the prisoner as she entered, in the company of the officers, and took her place in the criminal's dock.

Never in her life had Fanny Walters looked so charming She wore the same dress in which she had committed the murder —a dark crimson, which was in unison with her magnificently dark complexion. Her hair was so arranged as to display its richness of beauty, and her superb form, might well fill with envy all the women who beheld her. Her beauty produced a most favorable impression upon the crowd, especially its male portion. She looked as unlike a murderess and a Cyprian as possible. Her face was a shade paler than its wont; but she was perfectly self-possessed—gazing, with her dark, restless eyes, upon those around her as though she was herself an eager spectator, not a spectacle.

She surveyed the crowd, and recognized the faces of Julia and of Howard, also of several of the women of her own class. She smiled upon these latter, and then concentrated her attention upon the trial, which now commenced, and was continued in the customary manner.

When it was time for the accused to speak, all eyes were riveted with more earnestness than ever upon the prisoner. And Fanny Walters seemed to feel this fact; for she at first hesitated, and then stammered.

"She will break down," whispered the crowd. But the crowd were mistaken. She soon, wonderfully soon, recovered from all the embarrassment natural, almost inevitable, to a woman under her circumstances, and spoke (in a clear, musical voice, whose lowest accent sounded loudly amid the death-like stillness of the listening multitude) as follows:

"Gentlemen of the jury, I speak to you as fathers, husbands, brothers, sons; as those who have mothers, daughters, wives, or sisters of your own; as men who love and are loved by women.

I speak to you as a woman, and I crave your indulgence for what errors of language I may be, through my ignorance, betrayed into. I have nothing but truth to say, and I would say it briefly, boldly, as my heart prompts me."

She paused a moment, and you could have heard a pin drop in the grave-like silence of the vast crowd. Again she resumed:

"I am accused of having murdered a man. I acknowledge, it would be folly to deny it, that I stabbed a man so that he died. Yes; I *killed* him; but I hold that I did not *murder* him. Justice is not murder; he deserved his fate; the dead man was himself a murderer of women. I killed him not so much to avenge my own wrongs, as those of my sex, and to save others from his arts; for if he had lived longer, he would have damned more women, as he has already destroyed me and many others."

Here the judge making a movement as if to interrupt her, she continued, more rapidly:

"Listen: I was once pure. I had a doting father, and a devoted lover, whose life-wish was to call me his wife. In an evil hour, the man whom I killed came into our quiet country, and made me his victim. For pastime, he damned me, and drove me from home to shame.

"He injured not only me, but mine. My father went mad with shame and died of a broken heart; and my lover's life was blasted. Was not the author of this misery a murderer? I ask you all, as in the sight of that great Judge whom none can deceive, was not this man as much a murderer as if he had taken a knife at midnight and killed my father and myself?

"But I and mine have not been the only ones he has wronged beyond redemption. I know of a wife in this very city, the wife of a rich man, his friend, whom the dead man has ruined past hope, though the husband and the world know it not yet. I know of another victim in the country——"

Here the speaker was interrupted by a sudden commotion. A woman had fainted, and was carried out.

"The heat of the crowded room, most probably," said some one in the audience. But no; the fainting of this woman had

another and far different cause. It was "the wife" just alluded to by the speaker. This wife, Katherine Somers' friend and Henry Hericot's victim, being present at the trial, felt a sudden shock of conscience and shame at the unexpected words of Fanny Walters, and fell, unconscious.

The tumult consequent on this incident having subsided, the criminal continued: "This man's career has been one series of murders; and yet while alive he was flattered and feasted. Why, then, should I be condemned for one murder when he has committed a score? Why should there be one rule for the man and another rule for the woman? If there is any difference between the two, the latter is the better. I am a sinful woman, but there are many of my class who are nobler, aye, and purer, than many of those women who would despise us." She looked proudly around as she spoke as though expecting to meet and confront the gaze of Katherine Hericot; but Katherine was not there. "Aye, and many of us would rise from the depths to which men have brought us, and would become pure women did women themselves but permit us to do so. But no, the world first sinks us in perdition, then keeps us down, and meanwhile curses us because we do not rise. All are not thus cruel." Her eye seemed to seek gratefully the answering gaze of Julia, who, with Howard, sat listening intently. "But most of *you* are fearfully unjust to *us!*"

She paused, and the audience took breath. This was the boldest talk that had ever been heard in a court of justice. Learned lawyers looked at each other in astonishment; men smiled meaningly, and the women present moved uneasily; they were not accustomed to such language as this; it was to them a new experience. The judge spoke to the prisoner: "If you have aught to say in your defense touching directly the matter in question, the murder of which you are accused, we will listen, otherwise you must be silent."

Being thus charged, Fanny Walters "summed up her case."

"The man whom I killed was a murderer; the murderer of me and mine; our murderer in the sight of the God of the world, even if not in the sight of the world itself. He was the cause of my death to happiness, honor, and all hope of heaven; he was the cause of my father's sudden death from shame, and of my lover's long living death of agony. He has been in like manner the murderer of many other women, and of those who loved them. I forgave him the wrongs he had done to me; I met him and spared him when he was in my power, though I had sworn vengeance upon him. But I had, or thought I had, a mission to discharge to my sex. I might forego my own vengeance, but I would, at least, preserve other women from my fate. So I warned him that if he attempted to deceive and ruin women in the future as he had done in the past, the retribution I had not taken for myself I would take for them. Spite of my warning he sinned. Again was he solemnly warned, and again did he meanly rob a woman of her little all of honor. He tried to hide his crimes, to conceal them in the country, but in vain. I was on his track; I knew all. Still I would have spared him possibly. But one night I went to the theatre. Lying on my table in my room was a beautiful little dagger, which a Southern friend of mine had made me a present of. My escort noticed it, and, in jest, suggested that I should 'enact a tragedy part for this night only,' as he phrased it, and take the dagger with me. I complied carelessly with the request, and placed the dagger in my bosom. I was utterly unconscious that the man whom I afterwards killed was to be at the theatre; utterly guiltless at that moment of any bloody intent. But as the audience were dispersing after the performance I saw this man, though he saw me not. I heard him make a remark which indicated his utter heartlessness, meanness, and lust, and which proved that, far from relinquishing his foul schemes, he had conceived a black design upon the beautiful creature who had performed the part of Camille that very evening. Utterly disgusted, indignant at

this proof of his total depravity, convinced that all hope of his reform were vain, convinced that further forbearance to him was only further wretchedness and dishonor to my sex, the memory of my own wrongs, the recollection of my father and my lover swelling within me, I, scarcely knowing what I did, felt for my dagger, raised my arm, and the world knows the rest!

"True, I killed the man, but I ask you *is it murder* to kill such men? Is it not JUSTICE? If there were honest laws; if society looked at such offences as his as God looks at them; if an earthly tribunal afforded retribution for the murderers of women, then would my act be without excuse. I should have waited for the action of the law; but no, society smiles upon the slayers of women; and the *only* vengeance that can be had upon them is *just such* vengeance as I have taken. Can you truly say, then, that I am guilty of murder?

"Can you pronounce me guilty when you know that I but avenged my own ruin, the death of my old father, and the blasted life of him who would have been my husband? Can you condemn me when you feel that more than my own wrongs, I avenged those of my *sex*?—that I killed him not merely as an act of retribution, but also of *preservation*—not only for those whom he had already destroyed, but those whom he would have destroyed had his evil life been prolonged? He might some day have ruined one of *your* wives or daughters, gentlemen of the jury; who knows? he spared no one. Can you blame me that having warned him, finding all in vain, in a moment of sudden passion, being by chance armed with an instrument of death, I was goaded to inflict upon him the chastisement he so richly deserved?

"What would any of *you* have done had this man brought upon your dear ones the woe and shame he has brought upon *me*? Would you not have killed him like a dog? And are there twelve on earth, twelve honest men, with honest and manly breasts, the sons, husbands, fathers or brothers of women, who dare condemn the deed of her who has simply

lared to do what they themselves would have done in the like circumstances? Let old men with stony hearts, who call themselves moralists, prate of the sin of vengeance; yet every true man must feel that there is one crime which the law has never reached, the crime of killing a maiden's honor and a woman's soul. And until the law, with its iron fingers, clutches with a death grasp this foul offence, justice must be supplied by vengeance.

"Men of the jury, if a woman's honor is worth less than a villain's life, if you desire some day to see your own homes violated by the seducer, and have no redress, you will condemn me for murder.

"But if virtue is worth more than life (and none know this better than such poor wretches as I who have lost the former forever); if you would restrain the betrayer from entering your own doors; if you think, as the great God thinks, as He *must* think, that the *man* who sins is as guilty as the *woman* who sins; that to kill a woman's honor is as great a crime as to kill that woman's body; if you would not have lust to stain your own loved ones, then you will pronounce me innocent of all—of all—save taking a just retribution in the only way in which I could obtain it. I have done."

She ceased. The audience (which had scarcely, as it were, taken breath of late, so entranced was it with the beautiful woman, who, with flashing eyes and varying, mobile face, and graceful because natural gestures, and true because natural eloquence, had uttered such strange and bold words) now moved restlessly to and fro, as if released from the spell of a long enchantment.

And, said one man to another, loud enough to be heard by at least one-half of the crowd, "This woman has spoken truth if ever truth was spoken in a court of justice." This seemed to be the general sentiment of the audience. And now all eyes were turned expectantly, impatiently, anxiously upon the jury, who held in their power life and death.

We know what law is, and what legal forms are. But human

nature has something more in it, thank God, than merely cold, legal technicalities. Even judges, prosecuting attorneys, and jurymen have hearts, and these were touched by Fanny Walters speech, looks, and story.

We know not whether great legal authorities would have approved or not; we merely know the jury brought in a verdict of "Not Guilty." The crowd gave a cheer, which, though very unprofessional, was very sincere. The judge himself, and the prosecuting attorney himself, each in his own soul, approved the verdict. And Fanny Walters, exhausted by the emotions and exhibitions of the day, fell into the extended arms of her "friends," those poor women of her own unfortunate class who had come to the trial to give their sympathy to their fellow-sinner.

Thus, by this decision, a jury determined and a judge allowed, that *seduction was equivalent to murder, and punishable as such.*

"Oh, upright judge. A Daniel come to judgment," would there were more such judges and such juries!

* * * *

It rained on the night which followed the day of the trial. It poured incessantly. And in a certain graveyard, not far from the city, it was mournful, exceedingly. A graveyard, on a lonely, rainy night is the saddest thing on earth, saving the grave itself.

There was one mound which was comparatively newly made; it was that of him who was once Henry Hericot. Yes, the elegant form of that accomplished libertine lay wrapped in a winding-sheet, and confined in a coffin; doubtless the epicure worms were preparing to make a fine feast out of his delicate and pampered flesh.

Up, up, we say, Henry Hericot! Why, man, you are not wont to be so slothful in the pursuit of pleasure! The city is very gay to-night, spite the rain. You can see its sparkling lights in the distance. Be up and off, we tell you. Mrs. B—— gives a grand ball to-night, and of course you are invited. All the

world will be there ; and plenty of pretty women. Then the theatres have all fine "bills" to-night ; and they play the Traviata at the Academy. Just think of that, the Traviata, the Camille, the Lost One.

Then the "club," too ; will you not go there? Your comrades will be glad to see you. You can tell them some more scandal, and narrate some additional amours. The gambling-houses, too, are in full blast. You can cheat to-night, and win, as usual. Why do you remain out here in the rain? Why do you prefer the dampness, the bleak wind, the narrow coffin, the shroud, and the slimy worm, to the light, the heat, the elegant rooms, the gay dresses and the lovely women? Why are you so gloomy and still, with a set face and lack lustre eye, when you should be smiling, beaming, and drinking? Up, man, and quaff your champagne!

But no ; he heeds not our call. He remains in the dreary graveyard, in his damp grave, in his narrow coffin, with the loathsome worm. The wind howls ; and the lights of the city gleam in the distance. In that city sits Fanny Walters, thinking of the past, and the future. And in the NEXT WORLD is the soul of Henry Hericot!

CHAPTER VI.

A FINAL VISIT TO A VICTIM.

After her acquittal on the charge of murder, and her subsequent release, Fanny Walters returned with her old companions, to her old quarters, but she did not return to her old life. From the day she avenged herself and sex upon her betrayer, from that day she was a changed woman. Instead of being gay and reckless, she became thoughtful and quiet; and she abandoned all her former habits. It seemed as though she were now entering upon some new phase of life. Spite of the notoriety she had acquired, she confined herself to her room and lived in a state of almost entire seclusion.

Julia Singerly (how strange it seems to write Singerly for Witherson!) thought often and deeply upon Fanny Walters. The memory of her former visits to this woman; the similarity, yet great difference in their lives' histories (both deceived by and both avenged upon the same man, but in so contrasted a manner); the solemn truths, so fully appreciated by one, uttered upon her trial by the other; the words spoken by the latter while in prison, "Call upon me after my trial, after my fate is decided; then I will speak fully to you;" all these things caused Julia to think upon this strange, unfortunate, desperate creature, with great earnestness; and at last she determined to visit her personally. It so chanced that Howard, too, was deeply interested in this woman, and longed to make one effort more for her salvation. So it happened that, one morning, Julia and Howard called together upon Fanny Walters.

She still occupied her old room, the same in which Julia had first seen her. There had been no change in the apartment; the same elaborate carpet was upon the floor, the same prints hung upon the walls; articles of bijou and "nicknacks" were

still scattered around on the dressing-cases and mantle-piece, the same fanciful clock marked the passing hours, and the closet, as revealed by the half open door, was still full of dresses. The bird, however, whose cage, at the former visit, was suspended from the window, was dead, and the cage hung there no more, it had been given away.

Our visitors found the mistress of the apartment attired in crimson ; in the same dress in which she had stabbed Hericot, and which she also wore on the day of the trial. Did she wear this dress because it harmonized with her complexion, or because there were fearful, fateful associations connected with it which strangely fascinated her? We leave the reader to decide this point.

Fanny Walters, herself, throughout the interview, was more quiet, less excitable and passionate, more steadily solemn, if we may use the expression, than we ever before remember her. She looked, and moved, and spake like one whose fate was predetermined.

"I am glad to see you," she said to her visitors, as she handed them chairs. "I expected that you would call upon me some time ; and now I must first ask your pardon for the abrupt manner in which I met your kindness to me when you last visited me. But I was a prisoner then ; now I am free, and will speak freely to you, if so you would have me. You are very kind to me ; and to such as me but very few are kind. I have never forgotten you—and I thank you."

"Oh, if you would but let us save you," said Julia ; "save you from such a life as this !"

"I understand you, madam," replied Fanny Walters ; "but you are somewhat mistaken. I have already abandoned my former life. While I live, I err not."

"Why, then, do we find you in this place?"

"What would you have? Where else can I go? Besides, I have some friends in this place, some true friends, who did not desert me in my day of trial. I shall live among these till I die."

"Oh, no; do not say so," interrupted Julia. "I have money and influence. I will obtain for you some respectable employment in some distant place, where you are not known. You shall earn an honest and a pleasant living, and shall be happy yet."

"No, no," said the woman she addressed; "such a life as you dream of is not for me. Besides, I have erred too deeply for heaven to permit such a wretch as I to be so happy as you picture."

"Doubt not the mercy of God, my dear young lady," said the Rev. George Howard, solemnly.

"My dear young lady!" These words rung in Fanny Walters' ears.

"He calls *me*, one whom most would shrink from, a 'dear young lady,' as though I were his equal, or his sister's, or his mother's, or his wife's friend." So she thought, and the thought brought the tears of gratitude into her eyes.

Did Howard make a mistake in addressing the creature after this fashion?

We think not.

"Doubt not that heaven has good days in store for you yet, dear Fanny," said Julia.

"'Dear Fanny'! She calls me *dear* Fanny, as though I were her sister," thought the poor Magdalen. "God bless you both for your kindness to such as I," she cried, aloud. "But it is too late," she continued, "it is too late."

"There are no such words in the vocabulary of heaven as 'too late,'" said Howard. "I know of an asylum from the world, to which you can retire; and there, hidden from the gaze of men, you can devote your life to penitence and to religion. No worldly cares shall disturb you; you shall be free to give up your whole time and soul to prayer and repentance."

Howard was not generally in favor of exclusively-religious institutions of the kind he referred to; very far from it. But there are exceptions to all rules; and he considered that the peculiar nature, history, and position of Fanny rendered her more

than usually fit for the peculiar influences of such an institution as he described.

But Fanny, thankfully yet firmly, negatived this proposal also.

"But how do you intend to live?" asked Julia.

"I have money enough to support me; and I do not expect to live very long."

"Do you often think of death?" asked Howard.

"Often—of late, *always*," replied Fanny.

"And do you believe in a life after death?"

"Oh, do not ask me! Your questions but add to my torture. What matters it *what* I believe? My fate, I feel, is sealed; my end determined."

"And that fate, that end is ——?"

"What you may ere long see; at least as far as human eye can see it."

Howard now, in his character of religious teacher and priest of the Gospel, spoke to his listener briefly, but powerfully and thoroughly, of the great doctrines of the Christian faith. He treated of sin, repentance, atonement, forgiveness, and restored virtue; he spoke of rewards and punishments after death; in short, he preached a true, sensible, manly, healthy, sufficient religion.

Fanny Walters listened and occasionally interrupted him. She evidently admired his creed; and believed, in a general way, in all the doctrines. But its promises she considered inapplicable to herself; its duties were foreign to her lot; its threats were all that were for her; and these she had made up her mind to endure. She thought not of what might have been; she thought not of what could be; she merely saw what had been, what is, and what, as her fate would have it, *would be*. She was calmly desperate, and desperately determined.

And Howard found with grief that his religious efforts were in vain. There was a dark, fatal something in the soul of Fanny Walters that his lights could not reach: he must leave it to its darkness.

"You will not let me save you!" he cried, in despair.

"It cannot be as you would have it," she replied; "but I am as grateful to you both as though what you so kindly wish were possible. Oh, if all good men and women were but as forgiving and condescending to us poor women as you have been to me, there would be fewer of us. You especially, madam, have been most kind. I have never forgotten your first visit to me in this very room, years ago. See, I have the handkerchief I took from your friend," (alluding to Mary Barton, who, as our readers will remember, had accompanied Julia on her first visit to Fanny), "see! here it is," producing the handkerchief from one of the drawers of a bureau. "And how is your friend?" Fanny continued. "How is she? well, I trust."

"She is not only well," replied Julia, "but happy. She is married to a man who is worthy of her, and who loves her dearly."

"I am very, very glad to hear it," said Fanny, heartily. "May she live long to enjoy her happiness; for she has a good, kind soul. Give her this trifle for me," (handing Julia a little "nicknack" from the dressing-case), "and tell her to think of me when I am gone."

"When you are gone!"

"Yes: when I am dead.

"Why do you thus talk of dying? You are very young, and have many years of life before you."

"Ah, no: women like me never live to be old. It is a mercy that we do not, both for others and for ourselves. I may never see my next birth-day; I feel I shall not."

Here Howard took a part in the conversation. He seemed to be struck with a sudden idea, gathered from the words of Fanny Walters. Turning to her, he said:

"Do you think that men or women have a right to take their own lives?"

Somewhat surprised at the suddenness of this question, the woman thus interrogated answered by another question:

"What do you mean?"

"What I say," answered Howard. "Do you think that it can ever, under any possible, conceivable circumstances, be anything but a great crime to take one's own life?"

The woman evaded a direct reply on this point. "What do you think?" she said.

Howard's utterance on this subject had, at least, nothing uncertain about it. "I think that in all cases suicide is murder—a murder which nothing can justify." He said these words solemnly, and his hearer seemed impressed by them. At the word "murder" she started visibly; it suggested thoughts of him who was at that moment lying in his grave, sent there by her hand. But she recovered, and, turning to Julia, said—

"See, I have not forgotten you or your first visit either."

Going to the bureau she opened one of its drawers, and there in one of the corners was the little pocket Bible which, years ago, Fanny had taken as a memento from Julia.

"Look," continued she, as she lifted the Bible from its place, "look where I have kept it; right here along with a lock of my father's hair, and a ring of my mother's; along with the two dearest things I have on earth."

Julia looked at the lock of grayish hair, the plain, well-worn gold ring, her own little Bible, and then at the tawdry finery, and sin-tokens which filled the remainder of the drawer. Then she gazed at the poor, lost, lovely woman herself who was the owner of this miscellaneous assortment, and her eyes filled with tears as she determined to make one final effort more to save sweet, sinful Fanny Walters.

"Oh! by that hair and that ring, so sacred in your memory; by the memory of your father, of your *mother*, listen to us—listen to the precepts of that little Book I gave you years ago. Do not be desperate, do not talk of dying, but live, be penitent, and be pure. You *can* rise—you must rise; you can do what other women have done, and be a true and happy woman yet. I knew, as well as I know myself, a

woman who was once betrayed as you have been, aye, and betrayed by the same man. She, like you, was once guilty, and once desperate. She, like you, once thought that life must be all darkness and shame, and that there was no hope; but she lived on, repented, forsook her sin, atoned for it, and won the love of a true man, who (knowing all, for she would conceal nothing) made her his wife, and his honored and most happy wife she is at this very moment."

Julia spoke earnestly, as well she might, for was she not narrating her own history? And her words produced an effect upon her listener. A flash of enthusiasm illuminated her face, but only for a moment. The glow faded almost as rapidly as it had risen, and Fanny said—

"No, no, it is all in vain. What other women have done, or can do, I know not; but something within me tells me that *my* fate is sealed, to follow *him*." The last three words were uttered in an undertone. Then looking at the clock and noting the time, she said—

"But I expect some callers soon, persons who are not of your sort. I must bid you farewell. Take this (giving to Julia a photographic likeness of herself), and keep it in remembrance; and if you should hear of my death—you *may* hear of it soon, you know—do not speak or think harshly of me; and come and visit my grave in the summer time; and do not grudge to strew a few flowers over the poor Cyprian. And, now, good bye—farewell—for ever!"

"Why say 'forever?'" asked Julia.

"I have a presentment that we may not meet again—at least on earth. Farewell, then. You will not refuse to shake hands with me, wretch as I am?"

"Shake hands with you! No," said Julia, "I must kiss you. I shall think of you as a sister; and as a sister I kiss you."

And Julia Singerly kissed Fanny Walters.

And Fanny, as she returned the kiss, wept. Kindness and courtesy had done for her what all the terrors of earth

and hell could *not*—caused her to shed tears, and grateful ones.

She extended her hand to Howard. "I thank you, sir," she said, with as much dignity and true politeness as any "lady" could manifest, "for your great kindness towards me. Whatever may befall me, may you both feel that you have endeavored to do for me all that human beings can do for each other, more than any others have ever done for me, or my class. Oh! if there were *all* of you, there would be NONE of us. Good bye; and if the prayer of such as I is heard above, may heaven bless you."

"You, too, are my sister. I must kiss you, too."

So saying, the clergyman kissed the Cyprian on the forehead.

And gazing earnestly but silently on each other, the happy wife and the holy priest parted from the poor Magdalene—was it for the last time?

* * * * * * *

"Do you know that I think this strange creature, this Fanny Walters, may die soon?" said Howard to Julia on their return.

"It is only her sad fancies; she looks strong enough. What do you think she may die of?"

Howard told her his opinion on this point. Julia started. "Can we not prevent her?" she asked.

"No; impossible. How can any one prevent such a thing as that, at least under present circumstances! I said to her all I could well say on the subject just now, you remember."

"Ah, true. So you did. But the thought of such a fate as that is terrible."

"Yes, but there is much in life even more terrible than leath. May God have mercy on her soul," said Howard.

"Amen," said Julia.

CHAPTER VII.

A MAN, A FOOL, AND A CHILD.

In the far-off country, where she, who was now Fanny Walters, had lived during her happy childhood and her pure girlhood; near the lake whereon she had sported, in the days of auld lang syne, still lived the man who had once been her lover.

He was, and had been, since the disgrace and flight of the woman he had adored, with a love that such as he can feel but once on earth, a lonely, solitary, sad man. He had never smiled since the woman of his heart had left him, her home, and her honor together.

Still he was not gloomy or morose. He felt that life had its duties, even if it had no longer its joys, and that there was such a thing as a preparation for heaven, even if there were few pleasures on earth. And in the depths of his secret heart, he yet cherished a wild though hopeless and joyless love for the woman who had darkened and destroyed his life.

True, she was lost, she was impure, she could never be aught to him or to any honest man; but he had loved her once and he loved her still, though he never, by any chance, even so much as mentioned her name.

One day he casually came across a New York paper, containing a full and elaborate account of the singular trial and defence of an evil woman of that city, known as Fanny Walters. Something in the account suggested to him, he scarcely knew how, the startling idea that, perchance, this was the woman whom he had loved and lost. That, perchance, Fanny Walters was no other than she, of whom, for years, he had heard nothing

His reason scouted the idea, yet the thought returned and haunted him. He sent to a friend in New York for other papers containing the trial of Fanny Walters, and compared them. He noted all descriptions of the culprit's appearance and manners, all the items of her history which had transpired, and all other information regarding her. The more he read, the more this idea of the identity of the woman with the love of his youth grew upon him. He could not rid himself of it, by day or by night; he waxed feverish and agitated; and at last, one day, he made a strange, a wild resolve.

He would go to New York, he would end all doubt by personal experiment. And if his idea was correct, if the fallen one and his lost idol were identical, why, then, he would look upon her face once more before he died. He would not suffer himself to be recognized by her; he would hold no interview with her; he had not strength to bear it. He would merely look upon her face; *her* face, though sin-faded, yet still, doubtless, lovely. Then he would return home and die.

He yielded to the power of this idea; took the train to New York, and reached our great metropolis.

We need not fully narrate the story of his investigations in this city. Suffice it to say, he at last discovered that his idea was correct; Fanny Walters and the woman he had loved, aye whom he still loved, were identical. He also traced Fanny to her residence, to the house in which she lived, to the horrible home of sin which she had made for herself.

He found the house; but he passed not, he thought not of passing, its threshold; he shuddered at the thought of breathing its atmosphere of pollution. So he patiently walked past it day by day, and loitered near it, in the hope that she might some time issue forth, and he might see her. It could only be for a moment, it could only be once, but still it would be seeing *her* once again.

One afternoon he passed the house for the last time, as he determined, in his own mind. He saw her not. Well, he would walk down Broadway, to his hotel, and then depart to his coun-

try home, to leave it no more. It was fated, so he thought, that he should never see her again.

But he starts! What does he behold? Ah, reader, people behold much more on Broadway than one imagines. He sees a finely-dressed, and evidently handsome woman, approaching him from the opposite direction. She seems to be desirous of avoiding public attention; and yet the eyes of most are eagerly fixed upon her. She sees him not; but he sees her. His soul is on fire; his pulses beat as they have not beat before, as he thought till now they could never beat again. 'Tis the woman he has sought; 'tis she whose home he had just now passed in vain; 'tis she whom he once thought to marry; 'tis she whose kisses had once been his; who had been once pledged to be his wife; tis she, the murderess, the Camille, the ill-fated, the still lovely, the still loved woman, who had lost her pure childhood's name, and was now known but as Fanny Walters.

Her face again! How the old time comes over his spirit. He scarce can breathe. Involuntarily he calls her by the sweet name he had known her by when he walked with her in the country in the long summer's evenings; the name she answered to when his arm was round her waist, as they floated in their boat on the lake. He calls her by her old name, and in his old familiar voice.

She starts with intense surprise, as though the heavens had opened, and the world was giving up its dead. Her past *had* given up its dead. She turns, she sees him; in a moment, quick as the lightning's flash, spite of all the lapse of years, and change of scene, she recognizes him. All the memories of many bitter years are crowded into a second's space; all the recollections of her country home, her dead father, her youthful sports and purity, and him—her lover; all the sorrows and all the sins of the long, last years; all these, and God only knows what beside, rush upon her at once; the shock is too great even for *her*. She utters something which only He who knoweth all things can interpret, and falls, fainting. Her old lover rushes to her and catches her in his arms.

One passionate embrace, despite the wondering looks of the gathering crowd; one long, bitter, heart-expressing, heart-breaking kiss; one groan, one prayer, and, let us hope, one blessing; one more kiss upon the painted, faded, saddened cheek of the lost woman, who was to have been his wife; one exclamation of fearfully-mingled emotion. And, handing her to the care of some ladies, who charitably volunteer their assistance, he departs.

It is all over. Life has nothing more. He has seen her. He goes to his country home.

Within twelve months he was dead.

Men sometimes die of love even in America, and in the nineteenth century.

* * * * * *

"No, George, the idea is ridiculous. What! marry me; a woman like me! What do you suppose I wish to be married for? Am I not wretched enough already? Besides, do you suppose I could ever be constant? Go home, and become sober and sensible."

"Ah, Fanny, you do not talk as your heart, your soul, your better nature prompts. You but make a mockery of yourself. You cannot, in your heart, laugh at the true love of a man."

"George, are you serious? Men often *talk* of marrying such as *I*, but never *do it*. Are you in earnest? Do you love me well enough to marry me lawfully in the sight of heaven and earth?"

"Come with me to the nearest priest; *then* ask me that question. Fanny, I love you. I know what you have been, what you are. I know that all your own sex despise you, or pretend to do so; that all mine make sport of such as you; but I also know that you are beautiful, and that deep in your soul is a noble nature, which you never can reveal in such a life as now you lead. You are not what you seem, but better, far better."

"But your family, George—the sister of which you have

told me. Do you not think of them? They would never acknowledge me as your wife."

"What if they did not? The world may sneer at you and laugh at me. What matters it? Love is its own world; it has its own laws, and laughs at all others. If my mother and sister will not receive you, so be it; I regret it, but it will not shake my love. I am independent of the world. I am rich, as you know; young, no fool (though fools may call me so); good looking, as men go; ambitious, bold, and I love you. Let us leave this country; let us go to France, Italy, anywhere where you are not known, where your past can be buried in oblivion. Then and there as my wife you can forget all but your love for me; and *I* all except that I love you and have saved you."

He pleaded earnestly. His heart was in his words; his voice was full of music—the voice of a lover always is; and as she listened, the soul of Fanny Walters was sorely tried. Why should she not take advantage of George Atherton's fancy for her? Why should she not take him at his word and marry him? Other girls of her class had done this thing. Such marriages were by no means of unfrequent occurrence. Why should a sense of honor, which none would ever understand or appreciate, prevent her from achieving a glorious success in life? Why should she adhere to the dark plan which her mind had recently conceived? Besides, here was a chance for her to redeem her guilty past by a pure, loving future.

For a moment she was in doubt, and the earthly fate of George Atherton hung in the balance. But Fanny Walters, though a fallen woman, was not base. She would not avail herself of a man's folly. Besides, she had vowed a vow; she had registered an oath; her fate was sealed. What to her, then, was marriage or hope?

"No, George," she said, fixing full her beautiful eye upon her companion, "it cannot be; you love me now, but were I to marry you you would, in a year, curse me, and with cause.

What you talk about is utterly impossible. It can never be. It never *ought* to be. You are a man and have a man's work to do; and you have every chance to help you in your work. You have a bright prospect before you which should not be darkened by such a one as I. You say you love me. Such a love as this must prove fatal. And, despite all your oaths, such love cannot last. Time and the world would soon kill it, and the more violent it was, the sooner would it be over. There can be but one love between a man like you and a woman like me, and this *is not* the love that leads to *marriage.* Nay, protest not, George, but hear me. You have seen the play of Camille ; you have seen in it how a man of your stamp loved a girl of mine. She accepted him, and you know what misery came of it. She died of a broken heart; and broke her lover's. Beware, George ! Leave me. Forget that you ever knew me—you men can easily forget—seek out some purer idol, wed her, live honored and happy, and never think of me."

Here George Atherton interrupted her with exclamations and protestations. The young man was infatuated, but the woman was firm. And at last she led him to the door, and said, "Now, George, you must go at once, I wish to be alone. Good bye, and God bless you. It will be a great comfort in the last hours of a poor girl to remember that you thought enough of her to offer her honorable marriage ; a still greater comfort, to remember that she had honor enough to refuse it." The door of her room closed upon the slowly, reluctantly departing form of George Atherton, and Fanny Walters threw herself upon the bed and wept bitterly.

Our readers can readily understand this interview. George Atherton was a young man of family and position, who had become infatuated with the charms of Fanny Walters. He would have ruined himself by a mésalliance had not the poor woman herself restrained him.

It not unfrequently happens that young men forget themselves, their interest, and their obligations, and degrade

themselves by marriage with accomplished sinners, who seldom imitate the example of Fanny Walters, but secure their prey with avidity. And this is one of the great dangers incident to vice.

Of course, a man of social position and refinement is in little danger of marrying a low, vulgar, degraded woman. But *all* "sinners" are not "low, vulgar, or degraded;" and these exceptions to the rule of their class are the more dangerous. Many a lost woman is beautiful, accomplished, even refined in her tastes, often gifted with many noble qualities; and this brightness contrasting, as it does, so strongly with the darkness of her own life, and with the foulness of the companions of her own class, renders her all the more terrible. And under the influence of this strange, wild, unholy fascination, many men make shipwreck of their lives.

* * * * * * * *

The streets are crowded, for the day is very fine. It is a difficult, even a dangerous thing to attempt to cross the thoroughfares, thronged with the swift stages, express wagons and private "turnouts."

A little girl endeavors to pass from one side of the street to the other; but she becomes entangled in the rush of vehicles, and grows frightened. A stage approaches rapidly, the driver of which being engaged in collecting his fare, does not perceive her. A moment more and she will be run over, probably killed. She cannot escape; she is too frightened to make an effort to do so.

She is a very pretty child, rather plump, yet graceful, with blue eyes, flaxen hair in curls, and a sweet face. Doubtless she has many that love her, many to whom she is very, very dear, to whom she is more than all the world beside, who, perhaps, at this moment are anxiously wondering where she is. And yet she probably will be in a moment but a mangled mass merely to be wept over and then buried.

Stages approach, wagons rush, no policeman is by, no one

seems to notice her situation, she is in the midst of the whirl, and will soon be crushed.

But no, a woman darts from the sidewalk; and at great risk to her own life and limb, arrests the career of the stages; and, snatching the child in her arms, bears it away n safety.

The little girl recovers from her alarm, and smiles in the face of her preserver. And Fanny Walters, for it is she, is more than repaid for her risk.

"Where do you live, my little one?" she asks of the child.

"In F—— street," is the reply.

"And how comes it," asks Fanny, "that you started out alone?"

"Oh, I was playing with another girl, Mary Wilson, who lives near our house, and she coaxed me to go down the street, though I knew father would not like it. And then she ran off and left me. And then I wanted to cross over the street and go back to father, and then I got so frightened. Dear, kind, good lady, how father will love you for taking such care of me."

"Your father, then, loves you so dearly, does he, little one?"

"Oh, yes; oh, yes; and then I am all he has now, he says, since poor mamma died and went to heaven."

So spake the child in her youthful confidingness and simplicity. And as the woman listened, a thrill of memory rushed through her heart. She, too, had once a father, and one who loved her as his almost earthly all since *her* mother "died and went to heaven." But she had cursed and killed hat father.

"I cannot leave you, little one," said Fanny to her child companion, "till I see you safe Give me your hand, and tell me exactly where you live, and we will go there now together."

So saying, she took hold of the child's hand, and the twc

left the noisy, bustling Broadway, walked down one of the more retired streets, and were most excellent friends at once.

With all her sins, Fanny Walters had always kept throughout her life a pure corner in her heart for children. The young always took a liking to her ; and she or he of whom this can be said is not wholly depraved.

The two soon reached F—— street, and stopped at the door of the child's home. It was an humble but respectable dwelling. The ring at the bell was answered by the "father" himself, an old man, whose face lit up joy at the sight of his child, for whom he had, the last half hour, suffered a world of anxiety, and in search of whom he had dispatched his only servant. When the little girl recited her story and told of the "kindness of the dear, good lady," the voice of the old man faltered as he spake his heartfelt thanks.

"Oh ! my dear young lady, may God in heaven bless you," he cried; "you do not know how I love that child. Her mother is in heaven, and that careless, reckless, darling little creature is all to me on earth. May the blessing of an old man whom you have blessed be with you ever."

She bowed her head and took the old man's benediction. It gave her more genuine delight than could have been conferred by the gift of a palace.

God only knows how much she had need of a blessing.

CHAPTER VIII.

A SINNER AND HER SISTER.

One morning, Fanny Walters rose earlier than was her wont. She slept ill at nights now, tossed to and fro in thought, and did not fall asleep till long after midnight; consequently, it was generally late when she rose. But on the morning in question, she left her bed before six o'clock, attired herself plainly, and partook of an early and, therefore, solitary breakfast. After breakfast, she arranged her room and attended to various personal matters. She then did four things, to which we wish to call the reader's attention in the order in which they occurred.

She first went to one of the drawers of her bureau and took thence a likeness of herself (which, by-the-by, was extraordinarily life-like), and kissing it, looking at it intently for many minutes, placed it in the bosom of her dress.

She then took a pair of scissors and cut off therewith a lock of her own hair, and wrapping the severed tress in a neat paper, placed it also in the bosom of her dress.

She then opened a trunk which stood in her closet, and took thence a package of considerable size. This package she laid on a table and unwrapped it. It contained bank-notes to a considerable amount. She counted these, and re-counted them; the tally was correct. And then she fell into a fit of musing, which at last found expression in broken words:

"Shall I give these to *her*? They are," and she shuddered, "the price of sin. Shall I dare pollute her pure hand with their touch? No, no. But then she needs money to live—or she will be forced to beg—or to sin. This money, which I have gained by error, may *preserve* her from it; it cursed me, but it may bless her. She shall have it, then. She shall have it all," and

she accordingly re-wrapped the money in the package, and placed it in the pocket of her dress.

And then she went through the feminine occupation of "putting on her things," and passed out into the street, and, stopping at a book store, purchased several volumes. They were not such books as one would have imagined to be bought by a woman like her; for they were a copy of the Bible, and of a work entitled—"Moral and Religious Essays for Young Women."

Having completed these four successive preliminaries, Fanny Walters walked rapidly to the depot of —— —— Railroad, procured her ticket, and started in the first train. In short, she was going to visit her sister, who was still at the country school where we last saw her.

In due course of time, she reached the school and embraced her sister, who was enthusiastically delighted to behold her once more.

But Fanny's feelings on this occasion had a depth of which the soul of her little companion could form no idea. In the eyes of the former, this was no mere visit that could at will be repeated. No; it was something much more than this, and much more solemn.

And she clasped her little sister to her heart with so much passionate vehemence that the child wondered, and asked—

"Why, sister, why do you clasp me so tightly?"

"Because I am so glad, so very glad to see you, darling," was the reply.

"Then why," asked the child, "do you not come to see me oftener? And why do you not take me to your home during my vacations?"

Children often ask questions which sorely puzzle older hearts to answer. Fanny hesitated a moment, and then said:

"There is something prevents me. Something which you do not understand—which you never *shall* understand. But tell me, how are you progressing with your studies?"

"Oh, very well, dear sister. All my teachers are so kind to me, and they praise me so much."

"That's right. Be a good girl, and prosper in your studies, and you will always find friends—even," and here her voice became inaudible to her companion, "even when you have no longer a sister."

Fanny then inquired concerning the friendships her sister had formed among her school companions, and asked particularly concerning her health and comfort, receiving on all these points satisfactory replies.

And now came the most important and the most sorrowful portion of the interview between the sisters; the part which the elder dreaded, and which, as yet, the younger was in happy ignorance of.

"Sister, dearest," asked Fanny, as she kissed her companion, and wound her arm tenderly around her waist, "what would you do if I were obliged to leave you?"

"Leave me, how do you mean, sister?"

"Leave you for a long while—for many years; perhaps forever."

"And never come to see me any more?"

"Never any more."

"Oh, I should die, dear sister; for I do love you so, and I have no one else to love. But you are but trying me. You do not mean anything. Why should you go away? Where are you going to?"

Why, and *where*. These are expressive words. As applied to Fanny Walters, they were full of infinite and fearful meaning. But she replied:

"Darling, you do not know what you say. Though it breaks my heart, yet I must leave you—for a long, long while, at least." And then she muttered, as to herself,—"Yes; if I remain, she would some day discover what a wretch I am—and *that day* shall never come."

Here her sister broke forth into a fit of weeping. The grief of childhood is bitter and passionate; and the child-sister for a while would not be comforted; but Fanny assured her that they should meet again.

"But I did not tell her where." Thus Fanny Walters mentally qualified this last promise.

When her sister's grief had somewhat calmed, Fanny sent for the principal of the school. After informing the old lady that circumstances, which she could not explain, forced her to leave the country, she requested her, begged of her as the greatest of favors, to act the part of a mother to her sister during her absence. The principal was, of course, surprised both at this intelligence and the accompanying request. But Fanny entreated her so earnestly, offered to compensate her so liberally, so wrought upon her feelings that at last she acceded to her wishes; especially as she had already learned to love her new charge, and was aware that she would cause her little care.

So the matter was arranged; and the child, though she lost a sister, gained a mother.

Fanny Walters then produced from her pocket the package of bank notes to which we have already alluded, and gave them to the charge of the principal to defray the expenses of her sister's board, clothing, and education. As for security for the right use of this money she required none. She was a tolerable judge of character, and one look at the kind, grave, honest, motherly face of the principal was sufficient. It was better than legal documents.

And now the sisters were again left alone together. And Fanny took from the bosom of her dress the likeness of herself, which she had placed there this morning, and gave it to her little sister, who received it with mingled tears and kisses. "Every time I look at this," said the affectionate child, "I will think of you, and pray for your safe return. But where can you be going to, dear sister? To what country?"

"To a country that is better than this," was the reply.

"Will you be happy there?" again asked her little sister.

"Happier than here, certainly," replied Fanny Walters with fervor. Poor soul, she certainly could not be more *un*happy there, wherever it was.

She then took from the bosom of her dress the lock of her hair which she had cut off from her own head a few hours ago, and handing it to her sister, said:

"Here is a little keepsake; it will serve to remind you still more of me. But you must return the compliment. I must have a lock of your hair, too."

"So you shall, dear sister; and a nice long lock, too. See, I always carry my little scissors with me. Here you are. Look at this poor solitary curl often, and think of your ever-loving little sister."

"But here," said Fanny, as she opened the bundle containing the Bible, and the "moral and religious essays," "here is the very best keepsake I could possibly leave with you. Here are two good works which I wish you to read, and not only to read, but to remember."

"Oh, I shall do so, sister," was the reply; "be sure I shall do both, because I ought to, and for your sake. I shall read your Bible just before I go to sleep, and I shall always carry your hair with me by day, and every night I shall put it under my pillow. Then you know, of course, I shall dream of you."

Fanny sighed. Perhaps her sister might prove hereafter to be but a *vain* dreamer!

"Oh! what a nice little Bible," said the child, as she turned over the pages of her present. "I shall take it to church with me every Sunday. Do *you* go to church often, sister?"

Here was another home question, simple, natural, yet how could Fanny answer it? She could not tell a lie and say "yes." Yet, on the other hand, how could she shock the child's religious sentiments by telling her the awful truth that for years she had not entered a house devoted to the worship of the Almighty God. She evaded the question with a "not so much as I should," and then said, solemnly, tenderly, like one who is speaking the last words to one she loves—"Now, darling, listen to me, for I must leave you in

a moment: Be a good girl, study, please your teachers, love and obey the dear principal, read your Bible and the other book I have given you, and grow up to be a good woman. Pray to God every night and morning for yourself and for me, also, your poor sister. Perhaps it may *not* be even *then* too late."

"Oh! I always pray for you, and many, many times a day," interrupted the child, throwing her arms affectionately around Fanny, and kissing her repeatedly.

"And, darling," continued the latter, "I do not know whether you will understand me now, but you will some day; so I want you to remember particularly what I now tell you. When you become a woman, and I think you will be a *pretty* woman, do not go out with young men much, and never without some older woman with you. Do not let the young men flatter you, and do not heed their foolish compliments and vain speeches. But if some *good* young man, who loves to be with his pure mother and sisters more than with gay companions, seeks your love and asks you to be his wife, then, darling, say 'yes' to him, be happy with him, and be sure that you have my consent; and that, wherever I am, I will smile upon you and your marriage."

Strange words these to fall from the lips of a sinner. Alas! experience in vice is a great teacher of the beauties of virtue! Sinners often times appreciate good more truly than do saints; they have had a practical experience of the horrors of evil. Fanny Walters would have desired to be more explicit in her advice to her sister; but the pure young soul of the child would not have comprehended the meaning of the degraded, though loving, woman.

And so, with more general counsel of this same kind, the sinner took farewell of her sister.

We need not paint the pangs of their farewell. They kissed each other time and again; they wept in each other's arms; they murmured fond words; they looked into each other's faces; they were now silent and now vehement with emotion

We leave it to our readers' hearts to fully picture the scene of the separation.

Once Fanny's determination almost failed her. The child was so loving and looked so beautiful, how could they part?

But love and beauty cannot save from anguish and from parting. One last, long kiss, one long, last, fervid embrace, and the sinner had departed from her sister—forever!

CHAPTER IX.

THE LAST OF A WOMAN.

On her return to the city her sister's simple words, "Do *you* go to church often?" haunted the memory of Fanny Walters. Night came; there was a church not far from the house wherein she lived; as she sat by her window she heard its bell ring out upon the air; "I'll go to church to-night," she murmured to herself; and she went.

It was a Methodist church; and there was a prayer-meeting, or something of the sort, held within it. We do not approve of these "institutions;" they are noisy and sensational, and "of such is *not* the kingdom of heaven;" still, there are exceptions to all rules, and the meeting held on this night was as sincere as it was fervid.

And amongst the worshipers glided the form of a gay woman. She disturbed no one, none disturbed her. An awe came over her spirit. The walls were bare of ornament, there were no imposing ceremonies, yet she felt she was now, spiritually, in the presence of a God, before whom, ere long, she might appear face to face. She was no unbeliever; women of her class seldom are; perhaps they would be happier if they could persuade themselves that there is no God; but, unhappily, like the devils, "they believe and tremble."

Among the pious Methodists at the prayer-meeting knelt Fanny Walters. And yet she scarcely heard or heeded a word that was spoken. She was busily engaged in offering up a strange, wild, yet sincere, and perhaps not unacceptable petition of her own—a petition such as suited her peculiar situation and purposes, and suited naught else; a petition which orthodox people would call useless and blasphemous, but which God, per-

chance, deemed otherwise. It is a strange world this, and orthodox people are not infallible.

She had entered a pew where the lady, who previously occupied it, had moved and made room for her. I wonder if the lady would have taken this trouble if she had known who her companion was?

The service was over, and from the church our Magdelene returned to her home. And she sat by the window a long while—thinking.

God only knows of what—perhaps of her little sister; perhaps, why not, of God?

* * * * * *

The morning of the next day, Fanny again arose at a comparatively early hour; but not to visit a relative, but an almost stranger, a stranger who was no longer an innocent girl, but an abandoned woman. Aye, doubly abandoned, forsaken both by virtue and by friends. The history of this woman was briefly as follows:—she was a pretty creature, who had been betrayed, and had then taken to vice for a livelihood. But sickness had claimed her for its own, and her "landlady" had attempted to send her from her evil home, her only "home," into the streets to starve, or the hospital to die. But Fanny had accidentally heard of her case, interested herself in it, and by paying the poor woman's board during her sickness, had prevailed upon the landlady to allow her to remain. And to-day Fanny visited this woman, received her heartfelt thanks, spoke to her pleasantly, brought her some flowers and books, and served, in fact, as her guardian angel.

"Oh, how generous, how considerate, how kind, how very, very kind you have been to poor me!" murmured the sick creature on the bed to Fanny, as the latter bended o'er her couch of suffering. "How can I ever repay you?"

"By holding your tongue," was the reply, "and by getting well as soon as possible."

"But why should I get well?" continued the sick woman;

"what shall I gain by my recovery? I shall only have to resume my old, bad life."

"Are you disgusted with your—your—your *business?*" asked Fanny.

"Am I disgusted with it? Miss Walters, I would rather die in this bed than live once more as I have lived—if I could help it!"

"You *can* help it."

"How—are you jesting?"

"No."

"Then, for God's sake, tell me!"

And Fanny Walters told the sick woman how she had an acquaintance, a good lady, who was anxious to aid all those of her sex, however degraded, who desired to reform. In short, she spoke of Julia Witherson. And it was soon arranged that Fanny (who had received from Julia an address at which a letter would reach her) should write to Miss Witherson in regard to the sick woman's case. After some further conversation, Fanny Walters kissed the woman solemnly upon the forehead, bade her "good bye" and "God bless her," and departed from her sight *forever*.

Reader, there are many cases of kindness, charity, and friendship among "erring women," which put to the blush the lack of these qualities among women who are not, by the world, regarded as "erring." The charity and sympathy shown in this instance by Fanny Walters, to an unfortunate of her class, finds many parallels among our modern Magdelenes. And, surely, if He on high has written, "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy," it must certainly come to pass that in the last day of account there shall be much forgiveness found for those who, despite their errors, have yet been truly merciful, and therefore noble.

* * * *

The next morning, Fanny Walters created a commotion in the house in which she lived. She announced her intention of "going away."

The first one to whom she communicated this intelligence was a young girl named "Lizzie," who had been for some time very ill, and over whom she watched with tender charity.

Lizzie was still in bed when Fanny entered her room and informed her of her intention of departing.

After the natural inquiries and expressions of surprise, Lizzie said :

"Oh, Fanny, do not leave us—at least, not yet."

"Why not?" asked Fanny.

"Because I wish to have a chance to show you my gratitude."

"Gratitude for what?"

"Oh, how can you ask such a question? You know that for weeks you have been my nurse, my doctor; that you have, I verily believe, saved my life—and at the risk of your own. You have watched over me, and exposed yourself, to save me. How can I ever forget your great kindness?"

"Do you think it such a kindness to have prolonged your life?"

"Why, how strange you talk this morning, Fanny! Of course, I do. Life is the best thing for all of us."

"Is it?" said Fanny. "I think I know of a *better* thing."

"And what," asked the wondering Lizzie, "can be better than life?"

"*Death*," replied her companion, solemnly.

The conversation was now interrupted by the entrance of two other inmates of the house.

"Girls," said Lizzie, to the new-comers, "Fanny says she is going away."

"Going away!" echoed the two girls, in astonishment.

"Yes," said Lizzie : "she won't tell me why nor where ; but she is going soon."

"Why, Fanny," said one, "you never have told us anything of this before. You must have made up your mind very suddenly. Has anything happened? We are very, very sorry to have you go. We all like you so much."

"All, save Kate," corrected Fanny.

"All, save Kate," continued the girl; "but then Kate is of no account. You are infinitely nicer than she is."

"Come, girls, you flatter me," said Fanny.

"No, no," replied the young girl; "you are so kind, so gentle to us all; you have been with us so long, and you have done us so many favors, and have never quarrelled with us. You have been a little strange of late; but we do all love you so much."

It must be confessed that these words of praise, though uttered by a degraded one, were sweet. It was comforting to think that at least those of her own class liked her, and would miss her when she was gone. But she only said:

"Come, girls, I want you to go with me to my room. I have some little keepsakes I wish to give you before I go."

And, impressing upon the sick Lizzie a long, affectionate kiss, she left the apartment and went to her own room.

By this time, the news of her almost immediate departure was noised throughout the establishment, causing much surprise; and, at last, all the inmates of the household were assembled in her room, that apartment to which we have already several times conducted the reader.

To one of the girls (Sallie, as she was called, a mercenary creature,) Fanny gave several pieces of her jewelry; to another girl, called Emily, a gay, showy woman, she presented several of her most costly and brilliant dresses; while to a third, who was of a more thoughtful nature than her companions, Fanny presented her books, of which she had quite a collection. To Lizzie she sent a beautiful album, which she had bought expressly for her, and in which she had placed an excellent photographic likeness of the donor. And to Kate, her rival, the woman who envied her beauty and success, she likewise made a valuable present. She was far above all petty feelings. She also made presents to the remaining members of the household, not forgetting the colored servants.

"Why, Fanny, cried one of her companions, "you certainly must be going to some place where they do not need any bag.

gage. You are giving everything you have away ; you will have nothing to take with you—where can you be going? You are a strange girl."

So she was, a very strange girl ; and, what was more, she was going to a very strange place ; a place where you and I will go to some day ; a place where, as we brought nothing into the world, we cannot carry anything out.

* * * * * * *

After her visitors had left her room, Fanny Walters bolted and locked the door of the apartment, and sat herself down and thought.

Then she arose, and opening one of the drawers of her bureau, the drawer which she always kept locked, and hidden from strangers' eyes, took thence a package of letters, and untied the string which bound it. The first letter she selected was directed to her under the name that was hers in her childhood, and in a bold, sprawling, yet manly hand. It was a letter from her dead father, written years ago, during a visit which she paid to a maiden aunt, who lived at some distance from her own home. As her eyes rested on this letter, a tide of memories rushed upon her soul, and she wept bitterly.

But there were other letters connected with the days of her happiness and innocence. Among the collection were several notes from her girlhood's lover—from the country clergyman's son, to whom she had once been betrothed. Could it be possible that the broken-down, sad-looking man, whom she had seen for a moment recently in the streets of New York, was the tender youth who had kissed her so often in the days of auld lang syne? Again she burst into a fit of weeping.

God knows, if sorrow be an atonement for sin, Fanny Walters atoned by anguish. But she recovered herself, and smiling, with a bitter scorn, at her "weakness," she carried these letters, threw them into the grate, and saw them burn to ashes.

Then she took from the drawer another package : notes from her dead betrayer, under the signature of Arthur Hamilton ; notes from various women of her own degraded class ; notes

from various men, whose acquaintance she had made during her recent career; these, too, she huddled into the grate, and saw devoured by the flames.

Lastly, she committed to the fire, with many passionate, regretful kisses, a bundle of letters received from her little sister, whom she was never to behold again.

Then she sat down and performed two very prosaic actions; she wrote a note to her laundress, enclosing the amount of her last bill, and a trifle over; and then indited a similar epistle to her dressmaker.

Then she threw herself upon the bed and closed her eyes; but not in sleep. A knock was heard at the door. "Who's there?" she asked. "Mrs. ——" (naming the landlady or keeper of the house) "wishes to see you," was the reply.

"I cannot come down now," answered Fanny Walters. "Tell Mrs. —— to send for me in an hour." And as she heard the steps of the servant retreating, she muttered to herself, "Yes, in an hour Mrs. —— *may* see me, but not as she expects. She will be surprised at my appearance, doubtless."

She arose from the bed, took her ink and paper, and wrote hurriedly.

We will read what she writes; it will serve to explain the recent mysteries in her conduct and conversation.

At the top of the manuscript she inscribed this strange direction:

"To the nearest clergyman."

She then continued as follows: "Sir, when you read this paper I shall be dead; dead by my own hand; and, yet, do not condemn me till you have heard all. I was naturally, I think, pure, loving, generous, calculated to make a good woman and a true wife. My father loved me, so did another who was neither father nor brother; and I loved them both truly. But I was young, thoughtless, inexperienced; I was betrayed under the most atrocious circumstances by a man, handsome, heartless, and thoroughly versed in the arts of

the world. I fell; my father cursed me; my lover was lost to me; I had henceforth no lover, no father, no home; and yet, my fall was one more of ignorant folly than of willful error. The heaviest guilt rested on my betrayer, and, yet, I alone suffered. Had any compassion been shown me in my evil hour, perhaps I might have repented, and, at least, sinned no more. But I blame no one. After all, I killed my father, and broke my lover's heart. I deserved no chance for repentance, and I received none. I had no friends, no money. I must live, though a sinner; and so I sinned to live. Would to heaven I had done years ago what I am about to do now. But it was not to be; I was fated to fill up the measure of my iniquities. An unknown woman, with a brand upon me, how was I to obtain any position in which, whatever talents or knowledge I possessed, might be rendered useful? It was impossible; and so I became what, for years, I have been. And once having adopted this life, it was utterly impossible to escape from it. A good woman has visited me two or three times and told me that escape *was* possible; that I could enter upon a new and pure life; but though she talked sensibly enough, I know she is mistaken, at least in nine hundred and ninety-nine cases in a thousand; at least in my case. She may think *one* way on this subject, but I know too well that the rest of the world think *another;* and that if I had attempted her plan I would have failed. *Neither men or women ever forgive a woman who has fallen by man.* Besides, there was one thing I had proposed to myself—revenge! revenge upon my betrayer! I know, holy sir, you will tell me this revenge was but another sin added to my dark catalogue; and so, at last, I learned to regard it; and I abandoned all desire for personal vengeance. But I warned my betrayer not to act to other women as he had acted towards me; but my warning was in vain. And so, in a moment of ungovernable passionate instinct, I revenged the wrongs of my sex, as well as my own, upon him. I stabbed him, and he died. I was tried for murder

pleaded my own cause (you have read of it in the papers, doubtless), and was acquitted. I say, before God, that I do *not* think that in killing this man I was guilty of murder. But I felt that I ought not now to live much longer in this world. I had blasted the lives of my father and my lover, disgraced the name of my mother, blighted the prospects of my sister; I had added one sinner to the host of sinners on earth; I was but a public pest, why should I live? I had sent one criminal to his account, why should I, a fellow-criminal, remain behind? Besides, the longer I live the longer I must sin; for, alas! with such as me, life and sin are inseparable and identical; and in a few years I should be not only sinful, but ugly, faded, sick, poor, utterly wretched and degraded. Good people have told me that we have no right, ourselves, to end our lives. I know not whether this be so or not. If it is true I call upon God to forgive me; for I feel an irresistible fatality upon me to die. This fatality I cannot resist, and die I must. The voice of the man I killed seems to call to me from his grave. 'It is now your turn,' he cries. I have, at least, one consolation: I have not sinned of late, and the wages of my former evil career have been appropriated to the very best of purposes—the salvation of a sister, who does not know, and never will, what I have been. I have paid all my debts; I have remembered all my friends, such as I have; I have forgiven all my enemies, as I trust heaven will forgive me; I am, at this moment, a better woman than I have been for years; a better woman than I could long remain were I to live. It is, therefore, as I see it, my part to die. I have other reasons for death. I cannot explain them, but the One above me knows them all. I write to you, sir, though I have no claim upon you. I ask you, for the love of the God whom you worship, and before whom I am soon to appear, to grant me these requests—First, see that I am decently interred (you will find money for that purpose in a purse in the lowest drawer in my bureau), that I am buried in the quiet country, far from this

noisy, wicked city, in which I have sinned so long; and that no inscription whatever is placed upon my grave. Second, let the handkerchief and the pocket Bible (keepsakes of two good women, who were very good to me), and the lock of hair, and the ring (mementoes of my dead parents), which you will find in a little parcel upon the table, be buried with me. See them placed with me in the coffin. I shall rest better with such pure things about me, I fancy.

"Fulfill these requests, sir, the first and last that a poor girl has ever made, or can ever make, of you. Pray for my poor soul. And farewell till the day of Judgment.

"She who, while a sinner on earth, was known as

"FANNY WALTERS."

This singular, solemn, touching epistle, having been written hastily, red-hot, if we may be allowed the expression, from the heart, Fanny Walters took a slip of paper, and wrote upon it these lines:

"Dear Mrs ——, with this you will find a letter addressed 'to the nearest clergyman.' For the love of God, as you must yourself die, I beg of you to see that this letter is put at once into the hands of the first clergyman who can be procured; and do not dispose of my body in any way till the clergyman comes, and then let him arrange all. The letter will tell him what to do. Only see that they bury me in the country, not in the hateful city where I have suffered and sinned. I thank you for all your kindness to me since I have been in your house; you have meant well in your way towards me, but, oh! what a *bad* way that is. Excuse me for my plain speaking, but now it is my time to speak plain. Oh! leave the life you are leading while you have yet a chance, or else some day, sooner or later, you will follow my terrible example. I leave some money in one of the bureau drawers. Let it be given, in my name, to the neighboring poor, after deducting my funeral expenses. I know of a good lady, Miss Witherson is her name; she lives —— —— She takes an interest in bad women like us. If you will repent and forsake your present life (she says we

all can forsake and repent if we choose, though I cannot) she will help you all she can. Call on her at any rate and remind her of her promise to visit my grave sometimes. I shall rest the happier for her visit. Give my last love to all the girls in the house, and tell them to *leave* the house as soon as possible. Better the almshouse than a place like this. And now, good bye. My best wish for you is that we may *never* meet again; not even in the world to come, if there *is* such a world. Yet I will be happier even there than here. I have killed my father; I have seen my true lover lately, and the sight of me has blasted him; I have refused my only chance for marriage (George Atherton has asked me to be his wife; but, thank God, I told him 'no;' I have not his ruin upon my guilty soul); I have sent my betrayer to his account; I have been a scorn and a curse to others, a pest to society, a torture to myself, and now I go to God.

Perhaps *He* will have more mercy for me than I have for myself—who knows? I wonder what the next world is like. I do so hope that it is not at all like this. Tell Miss Witherson to remember me gratefully to that good man, her friend, the Rev. George Howard. He was very kind to me; and tell her that I hope she will herself be very happy with the man she loves; and tell her to kiss Miss Mary Barton (or she who was Mary Barton once—she is married now) good bye for me. And now I must cease writing, I have something much more serious to do. I must be off, *where* I cannot guess; but out of this world at any rate. Perhaps heaven will deem me, after all, *less* guilty than some women I have met. I, at least, have been sorely tempted, and have never been a hypocrite. An old man (whose child I saved) blessed me the other day; I prayed for myself at church of late; and there are some whom I have benefitted who will pray for me also. And perhaps these blessings and prayers will follow poor FANNY WALTERS."

This second letter she directs to Mrs. ——, the landlady of the house, and places it beside the other

(We would here call attention to one fact. No allusion whatever is made in these letters by the writer to her *sister*. On this one point scrupulous silence is preserved. Doubtless the writer intends that not the slightest hint shall be afforded even of the existence of such a sister, so that the latter shall never, by any chance, learn the shameful secret of the true character of the life that her guardian had led while on this earth.)

Having finished these letters, Fanny Walters proceeds to wrap up a little parcel containing "the handkerchief, the pocket Bible, the lock of hair, and the ring," alluded to in her letter to the clergyman, and lays it upon the table. She then goes to the window and looks out. The street is comparatively quiet, only a cart is passing; and there are but few pedestrians. And yet she gazes upon this peaceful and familiar scene as intently as though it were some thrilling dramatic spectacle. Ah, reader, any spectacle will seem dramatic if you know that you are looking upon it for the last time.

Fanny Walters then ascends, by a private staircase, to an observatory located on the roof of the house. From there she obtains a fine and extended view of the city of New York, at least of its house tops, each house containing its own Souls, its own Sins, and its own Sorrows.

She gazes north, she gazes south, she gazes east and west; then she looks downward towards the streets, and then upwards towards the skies, saying nothing even to herself, but full of utterly and terrifically undescribable emotions.

Then she takes from her bosom a small vial, looks once more around her, shudders, hesitates, and then, by a quick motion, raises the vial to her lips; and, after a brief struggle, a scream, and a contortion, she falls. Fanny Walters, on this beautiful day, lies in the observatory on the house-top in the great city of New York—dead!

* * * * * *

After a while the landlady seeks Fanny Walters. Her room-door is locked. In course of time, alarmed, they break

it open. The letters are there, but the writer is not. The letters are read and they understand all. The door of the private staircase is ajar. An idea strikes them. They ascend, reach the observatory, and the mystery is plain. Fanny Walters is *now* a Mystery.

* * * *

"The nearest clergyman" was sent for. He chanced to be George Howard. Need we say that every request of the dead woman was religiously observed.

* * * *

Fanny Walters sleeps in a country church yard, near the resting place of Hetty Thorpe.

Her living sister is a dear, sweet girl, who often sighs for and wonders over her sister departed, whom she will not yet believe to be dead.

* * * * *

Fanny Walters has gone from this sad world. Let us trust she has *not* gone to a world more sad.

Let us think of her mournfully,
Gently and humanly,
Not of the stains of her—
All that remains of her.
Now is pure womanly,
Owning her weakness,
Her evil behaviour;
But leaving, with meekness,
Her sins to her Saviour.

NOTE.—There is a vast city world known as "*demi monde*," which presents salient features alike for the novelist and the moralist. But into this world we have, in this present work, no time to enter. And we can only say that if we are accused of having made our sinners *too interesting*, and of having attempted to conceal the *darker aspects* of their ignorance, filthiness, drunkenness, profanity, riot and dishonesty (aspects which are, alas! real and only too evident), we can simply plead the *artistic* excuse that too dark a shade is fatal to a picture, and the *moral* apology that only by presenting the more poetical side of our picture to the world, could we ever hope to prevail upon the world even so much as to glance at it. Do we not stand justified?

CHAPTER THE LAST.

Now for a few "final words" concerning the various personages who have figured in the pages of our book.

Katherine Somers (afterwards Hericot) is now Mrs. R——. She is the wife of a rich man of position and influence, who met her subsequent to the death of Henry Hericot, was attracted by her stylish dressing and physical prettiness, offered himself, and was accepted. Katherine really loved Hericot, mourned his loss, after her feeble fashion, had been shocked at his untimely fate, and, for a while, had been more than ordinarily pious. But serious impressions with her were evanescent; the world, fashion, money were all in all. Therefore, when a living man, endowed with the gifts of fortune, was presented before her, to assume the place of a dead man's memory, she did not long hesitate to decide in favor of the former. So she married Mr. R——, and is now wealthy, flattered, fashionable; many would prefer her situation to that of Julia Witherson, now Singerly; but how mistaken would such judges be. Katherine is not happy. She feels that Charles and Julia despise her, and that she deserves to be despised; she contemns herself, for her conscience upbraids her as a hypocrite; she fears death, yet is not able, morally, to prepare for it; her woman's heart, crush it as she may, will, ever and anon, weep over the remembrance of the murdered man, the only one of her three husbands whom she has ever loved; and often, far too often for her peace, the memory of him who died of a broken heart, a heart broken by her criminal coquetry, crosses her midnight thought, bringing to mind a passage from a book she once read, "that in the day of final reckoning *the name of the coquette* will stand next to that of the *murderer*." Yes, Katherine is wretched. She dresses as elegantly and fashionably indecent as ever, is gay and flattered:

but miserably she lives, and miserably, at last, will she die. And after death, she will learn that many a woman who has never, on earth, technically "fallen," will, by Heaven, be judged more severely than many another woman who has been more despised, but more tempted. Such is the doom of Katherine the hypocrite!

But Mary Barton, or the young girl whom we knew by that name, and her husband, are as happy as the day is long. And as grateful to their benefactors, Charles and Julia, as they are happy.

The Rev. George Howard is meeting with the reward he merits; in kind, at least, if not to as great a degree as his friends would desire. Of course, "the orthodox" and "the unco righteous" rail at him still; but he cares not, and the world at large cares not either. All who know him love him, and the number of his admirers is rapidly increasing. His present is happy and honorable, and his future must be bright. The future of such a man as he cannot be otherwise. The world needs just such men. There are too few of them, and the demand for them is growing. We hope to see the time when clergymen of the present "fashionable" and "orthodox" stripe, the canting, long-visaged, fanatical, or milk and water priests, who have so long served, or *mis*-served as clerical models, will become mere specimens of the past, and will give place to good, sound, sensible men. Men who eat, and drink, and visit, and patronize the drama and dance; men who have the wisdom of scholars, with the instinct and the pluck of gentlemen; men, too, who are pure and honest in their lives, sensible in their views, practical in their endeavors, bold and unterrified in their doctrines, with an eye single, not to the "praise of men," but to the "praise of God." Howard is happy, too, in his domestic and social ties. His wife and he are one flesh and one soul; while his relations with his old friends, Charles and Julia, are of the most intimate character. He resides near these personages, and sees them daily. They almost worship him, while he returns their love and admiration in the fullest degree. Julia has told

him how a sermon of his, years ago, led her to her noble work of woman-redemption (though she has told him nothing more), and Charles tells him constantly how much he owes to him spiritually. Mrs. Singerly speaks of him in the highest terms. What more can he, as a friend, or a man, or a clergyman, desire? * * * * * *

We may here state that the Rev. George Howard keeps a "note book." From this we take the subjoined extract, written one night after witnessing Miss Davenport in Camille.

"Greatest, aye, and it may be, *purest* and truest of dramas, I have loved thee, thou play of Camille.

"The drama of Camille is of the most interesting description. Though a drama, alas! of real life, it has an excitement equal to that of a 'Bowery' piece, combined with the heart-interest of a "domestic play." One never is wearied beholding it. No low, "comic" underplot mars its beauty, but in gay, yet sad earnestness, the heroine lives, loves, sacrifices and dies. Oh, it is full of interest, this play of Camille!

"The scenes are well contrasted and suggestive. First, the wild, gaiety of Paris, then the love that bursts upon the gay coquette; then the retirement of the country, with all the hopes of a pure attachment glowing in the soul; and next the sudden apparition of a father, and the cloud that darkens these glowing hopes; then the despairing, passionate, yet dissembled parting; then the meeting at a ball, and the lover's frantic curse. And last, the death-bed, the reconciliation, and the death. Oh! they are well contrasted, and suggestive, indeed, the scenes in this play of Camille!

"The characters, too, are well drawn. The ardent, honest lover, the gay, intriguing count, the weak-headed, glorious-hearted St. Frivole, the damnable, comical old Prudence and the proud parent, are taken from the life.

"But how shall we do justice to the character of Camille herself? Camille, one of the noblest women ever drawn; Camille, a woman, the type of many; Camille, an erring, yet a noble woman; Camille, who sins, dances, drinks, lavishes extravagant sums upon unworthy objects, and has many

lovers ; Camille, who *loves*, loves passionately and truly, loves fondly and self-sacrificingly, and who gives up the many for the one ; Camille, who abandons her gay life in the city for a loving existence in the country, who wishes for naught save love and her lover ; Camille, who, for her lover's dear ones' sakes, and for his own sake surrenders all her hopes of heaven on earth, and returns to that lonely, crowded life, which is to her now pure heart a hell ; Camille, who patiently bears her lover's curse, and who is faithful to her vow through all agonies ; Camille, who dies happy, aye, and *holy* in her lover's arms. Camille, Camille, outcast, lost one, yet more pure in repentance and devoted, self-sacrificing, self-destroying love than many a woman of most immaculate and icy virtue. Camille, Camille, how shall we do justice to thy slandered worth ?

" Of course the unco-righteous upbraid us for this eulogium upon a Parisian Cyprian. Pious priests elongate their white cravated throats in surprise at our audacity; and moral mammas hold up their hands in horror at our unblushing libertinism. Still, spite of priests and mothers, we declare upon our honor that Camille, in the much-abused, yet popular play of that name, is *at heart* a pure, and most certainly a noble and penitent woman ; and that, therefore, the *moral* tendencies of the play itself are good, spite the clamor against it; which clamor, by-the-bye, comes from those who have never seen the play, and who, if they *had* seen it, would not have been capable of appreciating it.

" Camille, though thou wert a Parisian, and a Cyprian, we honestly believe that at the last great day of Judgment, when all are guaged by their hearts, thou wilt find upon thy Judge's face a smile of pardon, such as he bestowed in his olden, human days upon repentant Mary Magdalene.

" Camille, pure, sweet, loving, sacrificing, hoping, repenting, dying Camille farewell, for a while—farewell !"

In regard to this extract, we would simply remark that In admiration of the play, and appreciation of its heroine, we agree with the Rev. Howard. But we believe that Du-

mas *has not carried the moral of his drama far enough.* Dumas seems to think that the only way a woman who errs can atone is by love and death. We believe that a better way of atonement is *by a life of repentance and practical goodness:* Believing this, *we have written this book.*

* * * * * *

As for Mrs. Singerly, she considers herself the happiest mother in New York city or State. She loves her children, dotes upon her little grandchild, the baby-daughter of Charles and Julia, and seems twenty years younger than she did in the old wretched time of the past. She is honored and loved by her family, she is revered by all who know her, she is destined, probably, to a long life, certainly to a happy death. What more can mortal creature ask? One or two changes are noticable about Mrs. Singerly. She has more mercy on "fast" young men than she had formerly, she speaks to them kindly, is hopeful for them, reproves them gently and sensibly, and has consequently reformed several. She is also less bigoted in religious matters, and often accompanies her children to churches which are by no means generally deemed "orthodox." Especially do we notice, that she has more pity and less censure for the frail ones of her own sex. She prays for them more and scorns them less. As for Charles, she still adores him. He is still her "idol boy." And perhaps she has learned to love Julia almost as deeply and tenderly as her own son. Certainly she respects her as truly as though she were Victoria, queen of England.

And words cannot adequately express the bliss that fills the wedded lives of Charles and Julia; the joys that compass all their days. Only they who have exquisitely suffered and sorrowed, like them, can, like them, be rendered exquisitely blessed. God be thanked, our capacity for pain is also the guage of our capacities for pleasure. Heaven be praised, even the memory of agony is an additional drop in the cup of present happiness. And so our lovers, for they are lovers still, are full of joy, alike in having learned the lessons of the past, in enjoying the delights that each day brings with it, and in looking forward to a cloud-

less future ; cloudless, we call it, for whatever else may befall that future must be serene which is destined to be illumined by the sunshine of love.

Charles is as "steady" as he is happy—he has had his fill of dissipation ; he is also as careful as he was formerly careless. He is liberal, generous, charitable in pecuniary matters, but is not loose or reckless ; keeps accounts, and is a good business man. He is also particular in his friendships and associations ; he has respected Hericot's memory and paid his debts ; but he has no more such "friends." He is a conservative in politics and religion ; takes an interest in both, but goes to extremes in neither. He has also become a conservative in literature, writes both prose and poetry, but indites less wildly than was his wont ; and writes with a practical purpose, to benefit as well as delight the public. In his writings, he often alludes to the subject of woman, and he treats this delicate theme *so* delicately, that it is evident that he has "learned from experience." Charles is also very liberal to the brothers of his craft, and many a struggling author has been relieved by him.

In his domestic relations, Charles is truly to be envied. His love to his mother, great as it is, is fully reciprocated ; while his love for his wife surpasses all other feelings. And his respect for her equals his affection. She has been to him, indeed, a virtuous and true wife ; she has proved "a crown of honor to her husband." And Charles is true to her in every thought of his life. He has learned, by the past, that error in a man is as criminal and dangerous as error in a woman ; that seduction is equivalent to murder ; and the story of Hetty Thorpe and Henry Hericot have taught him lessons that he never will forget. He is a truly happy and a truly *moral* man !

And Julia is a worthy companion for such a man as Charles. She retains her old fondness for expenditure, but is less extravagant ; and as she spends more money upon others than on herself, we must pardon her. She is proud, too, but somewhat more subdued than formerly. She is studious still, but her themes are less abstruse and more useful ; and her musical abili-

ties are brought, spite her marriage, into constant activity. She practices chiefly upon the piano on which she performed that eventful night when she made the acquaintance of old Shiner, having purchased this instrument from her friend the widow, and keeping it as a memento of the eccentric miser to whom she is so deeply indebted. She is very charitable, and does a vast deal of good. She is a high-toned, talented, glorious, charming woman—and so loving, and so beloved! The very best of wives and mothers, and daughters, as old Mrs. Singerly will vouch for.

Occasionally memories of the past visit her; she muses upon Hericot and Kate Somers; but she pities and forgives them. Sometimes, too, she shudders at the recollection of her old wicked theories of marriage and religion, and at the shame to which they led. This recollection is most exquisitely painful. It is an agony, every moment of which is more than a year of ordinary sorrow. It is the one drop of poison in the life-cup of Julia. It is the one woe for which there is no balm. But the pang is as brief as bitter. She feels that, though once a "fallen woman," she has risen, has atoned, and is now pure and pardoned. One thing, however, she never forgets, one thing is never absent long from her thoughts, her desire and determination to benefit and rescue the degraded of her own sex. She sees that those she saved are kept safe; she also takes heed to the salvation of others. She does all this now quietly and indirectly, but she does it effectually, nevertheless. And God only knows the full extent of the great good she is doing. She has been taught that society is directly responsible for immorality—and that, after all, it is not the only social evil in existence—and she will never forget her teaching.

And she is happy. Ah, reader, there is no bliss like that enjoyed by those who have erred and strayed, have suffered, repented, atoned, and been forgiven. And that *all who have thus sinned, may thus be saved,* is the principal lesson of this our book

Hereafter, when we encounter a woman who is "*erring,*" let us see to it that we endeavor to develope in her that better nature, which is truly "*noble!*"

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